

## CONTENTS

*Frontispiece*

The Sūtra of the Eight Knowledges of Great Beings ..	137
Did I-ching go to India? — <i>T.H. Barrett</i> .. ..	142
A Critical Examination of Nānavīra's 'A Note on Paṭiccasamuppāda' (2) — <i>Bhikkhu Bodhi</i> .. ..	157
Gotama the Physician: Dhamma, Science and Knowledge — <i>David Evans</i> .. ..	182
Jhāna and Samādhi — <i>John D. Ireland</i> .. ..	193
Ekottarāgama (XXIV) — tr. <i>Thích Huyền-Vi and Bhikkhu Pāsādika</i> .. ..	205
Review Article: Are There Two levels of Truth and Reality? — <i>Karel Werner</i> .. ..	213
Book Reviews .. ..	223

ISSN 0265-2897

© 1998 *Buddhist Studies Review*

*Buddhist Studies Review* is the semi-annual journal of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies and is sponsored by the Institut de recherche bouddhique Linh-Sơn

*Editor and Chairman, Editorial Board:* Russell Webb  
*Assistant Editors:* Bhikkhu Pāsādika Sara Boin-Webb  
*Board Members:* Cathy Cantwell Rupert Gethin

*North American Representative:* Charles S. Prebish

*Advisory Committee:* Ven. Thích Huyền-Vi (*Spiritual Adviser*)  
 Eric Cheetham J.W. de Jong  
 Hubert Durt K.R. Norman  
 G.C. Pande Charles Prebish  
 Peter Skilling Paul Williams

For editorial addresses and subscription details, see inside back cover.

如是或若意諸  
 影則語以主法  
 不樂或清意意  
 離隨行淨造先  
 形彼業意依導





Frontispiece: the calligraphy in Chinese characters by Ven Thích Huyền-Vi reads:

*Mental phenomena are preceded by mind, have  
mind as their leader, are made by mind.  
If one acts or speaks with a pure mind, from  
that happiness follows him, like a shadow  
not going away.*

Dhammapada I v.2 (tr. K R Norman)  
© Pali Text Society 1997

## PA TA JEN CHIAO CHING: THE SŪTRA OF THE EIGHT KNOWLEDGES OF GREAT BEINGS PROPOUNDED BY THE BUDDHA

### Introduction

The sūtra which follows corresponds to Taishō 779 of the Chinese Buddhist Canon and is No. 512 in the Nanjio catalogue. No Tibetan version exists. It is known only in Chinese, the Sanskrit original having been lost and, according to the *K'ai yüan shih chiao lu* (T 2154), was translated from the latter language by the Parthian An Shi-kao who arrived in Lo-yang in 148 CE where he worked at translating Buddhist texts until 168 CE, that is, under the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).

The *Pa ta jen chiao ching* is a Mahāyāna sūtra describing the knowledges possessed by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas with the aim of inculcating in a person who aspires to spiritual perfection thoughts to be cultivated mentally. If one realises the human ideal which the sūtra proposes, one is certain to attain the final goal, Enlightenment which frees one from the cycle of rebirths and transforms one into a Buddha.

Particularly appreciated in the Buddhist world, especially in China and Taiwan, there have been numerous editions of this sūtra as well as commentaries upon it.

In 1995, the sūtra was the topic of a Seminar of Chinese Language held by the Fundacion Instituto de Estudios Budistas in Buenos Aires, which was attended by the nun Shi Dzau Dzan of the Chinese Chong Kuan temple in the same city and Ricardo Chen. The first edition of this Spanish translation was made at the above-mentioned temple. There now follows a corrected and extended version of that first edition, translated into English for the first time, and published with the kind permission of the editors of *Revista de Estudios Budistas* 11 (Apr-Sept 1996), where it first appeared.



The Sūtra of the Eight Knowledges of Great Beings  
propounded by the Buddha  
(*Pa ta jen chiao ching*, Taishō 779)

The disciple of the Buddha, day and night, with sincere devotion, constantly recites the *Sūtra of the Eight Knowledges of Great Beings*.

*First Knowledge*

The world is impermanent.  
The earth is full of dangers  
and exposed to destruction.  
The Four Great Elements  
are a cause of suffering,  
are empty.  
The Five Aggregates of man  
are insubstantial,  
they arise, perish,  
are in constant flux,  
are unreal,  
are dependent.  
The mind is the source of evil,  
the body is a seat of impurities.  
Meditating, reflecting thus  
one frees oneself gradually from Saṃsāra.

*Second Knowledge*

Much craving produces suffering.  
The infinite births and deaths  
with the debilitating weariness they engender  
arise from craving and passion.  
Little craving does not produce suffering  
— one is the owner of one's body and mind.

*Third Knowledge*

The mind is insatiable,  
it desires only to acquire ever more  
causing bad actions to proliferate.  
The Bodhisattva is not like that:  
He is permanently established

in complete contentment,  
he lives satisfied with little,  
does not swerve from the Path,  
Wisdom alone is his goal.

*Fourth Knowledge*

Sloth degrades;  
the constant practice of vigour  
destroys the evil  
constituted by the impurities,  
subdues the Four Māras,  
releases from the prison  
of the *skandhas* and *dhātus*.

*Fifth Knowledge*

From ignorance arises Saṃsāra,  
because of this the Bodhisattva  
meditates constantly,  
studies intensively,  
by listening learns much,  
increases his Wisdom,  
then attains the power of eloquence,  
transforming everyone with his teaching  
only with a view to  
great bliss for beings.

*Sixth Knowledge*

Poverty with its needs  
generates much hatred,  
without one becoming aware  
it binds one to evil destinies.  
Because of this the Bodhisattva  
practises giving,  
considering as equals friends and enemies,  
not recalling past misdeeds,  
not abhorring wicked men.

*Seventh Knowledge*

The five sense-pleasures  
provoke excesses and misfortunes.



Even while being a lay person  
one should not fix one's thought  
on impure mundane happiness,  
but keep in mind the three robes,  
the alms-bowl and the implements  
permitted by the Dharma,  
so that the firm resolve may arise  
to leave home  
to take up a wandering and mendicant life,  
following the Path in a pure form,  
practising the religious life  
in an elevated manner,  
having compassion for all beings.

#### *Eighth Knowledge*

Samsāra is a fire  
which burns everything,  
producing suffering  
and boundless affliction;  
because of this one should engender in oneself  
the mental attitude proper to the Mahāyāna:  
everywhere help everyone,  
make a vow to undergo,  
in the place of all beings,  
their infinite sufferings;  
procure for all beings  
perfect Great Bliss.

Such are the principles which were known by the Buddhas and  
Mahāsattva Bodhisattvas.

With vigour they practise the Path;  
cultivate in their hearts  
Compassion and Wisdom;  
navigate with the Dharmakāya as their vehicle  
until they reach the shore of Nirvāṇa.

They return again to Samsāra  
to liberate all beings;  
by means of the eight preceding principles

they guide all beings to their Enlightenment,  
causing all beings  
to be conscious of the suffering  
which is proper to Samsāra,  
causing them to abandon the five sense-desires  
and causing them to cultivate wholeheartedly  
the holy Path.

If the disciple of the Buddha  
recites these eight principles,  
meditating constantly on them,  
he will destroy infinite wrongs,  
will advance rapidly towards Enlightenment,  
will progress at speed on the path  
towards Perfect Enlightenment,  
will definitively eliminate Samsāra  
and will for ever be happy.

Translated from Chinese into Spanish by  
Shi Dzau Dzan, Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti.  
English version by Sara Boin-Webb.



## DID I-CHING GO TO INDIA?

### Problems in Using I-ching as a Source for South Asian Buddhism

T. H. Barrett

For almost a century and a half Sinologists in this country have been accustomed to being buttonholed by their Indological colleagues who wish to know what light Chinese sources might throw on Indological problems<sup>1</sup>. We are, I am sure, always pleased to help, but if sometimes we might seem to hesitate to give straightforward answers, we would like our colleagues to be aware that such hesitation need not be due to indifference, incompetence or false modesty. Rather, Chinese information on India is often deeply puzzling for reasons which are not merely linguistic. In asking the question in my title I would no more wish to question the historical reality of I-ching's journey to India than I would Marco Polo's visit to China<sup>2</sup>. What I would wish to

1 See 'Notes of a Correspondence with Sir John Bowring on Buddhist literature in China. by PROFESSOR WILSON, PRESIDENT. With Notices of Chinese Buddhist Works translated from the Sanskrit. By REV. E. EDKINS', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* XVI (1856), pp.316-39, which shows that Wilson was having Chinese works purchased on his behalf as early as 1854. Of course, there have also been a number of virtuosi in Western scholarship who have spanned both traditions, and it is gratifying to see that scholarship at this heroic level is still not a thing of the past, to judge by Jonathan A. Silk, 'The Composition of the *Guan Wuliangshoufo-jing*: Some Buddhist and Jaina Parallels to its Narrative Frame', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25.2 (April 1997), pp.181-256.

2 I-ching is probably best known to Indologists under the romanisation I-tsing, used by Takakusu in 1896, and earlier by Chavannes in 1894, in their translations of his works. Here I have used the Wade-Giles forms for Chinese names, since they represent a standard still better known in Buddhist studies than pinyin. I have, however, referred to the contemporary Chinese Indologists Wang Bangwei and Ji Xianlin in the pinyin spellings that they themselves use;

do, however, is to suggest that the records of both journeys exhibit problems at a variety of levels which demand careful consideration before these sources may be used as evidence.

Thus, notoriously, the account as we have it of Marco's Chinese sojourn turned out to be so at variance with what later European visitors of the sixteenth century found that for some time many learned men even hesitated to identify his Cathay with China. One modern reaction to this has been to suspect foul play, to accuse Marco of playing some sort of gigantic hoax on his readers. But while it is certainly possible to point to one or two palpable lies in the text of the work that goes under his name, it is in my view much more profitable to meditate on the differences between Europe in the thirteenth century and in the sixteenth, as well as the differences between thirteenth and sixteenth century China, and — yet further — to try to understand the vast differences that separate his viewpoint (that of an expatriate isolated in a predominantly Muslim foreign community, living in a China controlled by Mongols) from the perceptions of jetsetting moderns today. On this topic I will say no more, especially since Peter Jackson of Keele University has published an excellent account of how his tale stands up as a mediaeval document<sup>3</sup>, but in what follows the similarities and differences between I-ching and Marco may perhaps be kept in mind.

For Chinese travellers to India certainly brought their own cultural attitudes with them, affecting not simply their outlook on what they saw, but also their very modes of expression, which must always be read against Chinese conventions if they are not to mislead us utterly. I have already drawn attention to one particular form which Chinese conventions of description could take in India, in discussing the reasons why Chinese Buddhist

in Wade-Giles they would be Wang Pang-wei and Chi Hsien-li respectively, though the latter was also known during the earliest stages of his career in Germany as Dschi Hiänlin.

3 Peter Jackson, 'Marco Polo and his Travels', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61.1 (1998), pp.82-101.



visitors to the holy places of Buddhism might be moved to tears, and I am very happy to see that at least one Indologist has found my remarks on this point useful<sup>4</sup>. In exploring one little corner of I-ching's writings, however, I find more to say about politics than literature, though again I hope that Indologists will see my remarks, limited as they are, as but a case study of a phenomenon which may well deserve more extended consideration.

Once again my object is to suggest that we cannot read a travel record like that of I-ching straightforwardly as an eye-witness deposition, but this time with particular regret, for though we possess several accounts of overland voyages from China to India, I-ching presents the most detailed information we have on the sea route out and back which he took through South-East Asia on his way to study in Nālandā, granted that beyond that route there is little sign of his having explored India beyond the closely grouped historic sites of Buddhism at all<sup>5</sup>. The quickest way to draw attention to the entire passage in which it occurs, first in the well-known translation by J. Takakusu (with the orthography updated), and secondly in the most recent translation I know of the portion of the text in question, by Daniel Boucher.

'The priests and laymen in India make caityas or images with earth, or impress the Buddha's image on silk or paper, and worship it with offerings wherever they go. Sometimes they build Stūpas of the Buddha by making a pile and surrounding it with bricks. They sometimes form these stūpas in lonely fields, and leave them to fall into ruins. Any one may thus employ himself in

4 T.H. Barrett, 'Exploratory Observations on Some Weeping Pilgrims', in T. Skorupski, ed., *Buddhist Studies Forum I* (London 1990), pp.99–110. See also Malcolm David Eckel, *To see the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton 1994), pp.57–8.

5 See the fold-out map incorporated into J. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D.671–695)*, by I-tsing (Oxford 1896; repr. New Delhi 1982), and the maps included in the works mentioned by Wang Bangwei: his study cited in n.11 below gathers on its pp.257–8 all we may know concerning his travels within India; they do not seem to have amounted to much.

making the objects for worship. Again, when the people make images and caityas which consist of gold, silver, copper, iron, earth, lacquer, bricks, and stone, and when they heap up the sand or snow, they put in the images or caityas two kinds of śarīras. 1. The relics of the Great Teacher. 2. The gāthā of the Chain of Causation.

The Gāthā is as follows:

All things (Dharmas) arise from a cause.

The Tathāgata has explained the cause.

This cause of things has finally been destroyed;

Such is the teaching of the Great Śramaṇa (the Buddha).

If we put these two in the images or caityas, the blessings derived from them are abundant. This is the reason why the Sūtras praise in parables the merit of making images or caityas as unspeakable. Even if a man make an image as small as a grain of barley, or a caitya the size of a small jujube, placing on it a round figure, or a staff like a small pin, a special cause for good birth is obtained thereby, and will be as limitless as the seven seas, and good rewards will last as long as the coming four births. The detailed account of this matter is found in the separate Sūtras<sup>6</sup>.

Next, Boucher:

'[People in India] make [incense] paste caityas [another term in this context for stūpa] and paste images from rubbings. Some impress them on silk or paper, and venerate them wherever they go. Some amass them into a pile, and by covering them with tiles, they build buddha-stūpas. Some erect them in empty fields, allowing them to fall into ruin. Among the monks and laity of India, they all take this as their practice. Furthermore, whether they build images or make caityas, be they of gold, silver, bronze, iron, paste, lacquer, brick or stone; or they heap up sand or snow, when they make them, they place inside two kinds of relics. One is called the bodily relic of the Great Teacher; the second is called the dharma-verse relic on causation. This verse goes as follows:

All things arise from a cause.

The Tathāgata has explained their cause

And the cessation of the cause of things.

This the great ascetic has explained.

6 Takakusu, *Record*, pp.150–1, minus footnotes.



'If one installs these two [relics], then one's blessings will be extremely abundant. This is why the sūtras, expanded into parables, praise this merit as inconceivable. If a person builds an image the size of a bran kernel or a caitya the size of a small jujube, and places on it a parasol with a staff like a small needle, an extraordinary means [is obtained] which is inexhaustible as the seven seas. A great reward [is obtained] which, pervading the four births, is without end. Details of this matter are given in other sūtras<sup>7</sup>.

I have to admit at this point that the flagrant anomaly in both these translations results from my own editorial intervention. Both try to gloss over the reference in the original Chinese to making Buddha-images out of snow, which I-ching certainly could not have seen during his journey to and from the plains of north India through the tropics: Takakusu in fact translates 'snowy-sand' (lit. sand-snow), and Boucher translates 'sand like snow'. But in Chinese qualifier precedes qualified, so if that is indeed the relationship between the two words, 'sandy snow' is the only possible translation, to say nothing of the impracticability of making a sandcastle Buddha out of sand fine enough to appear as white as snow. A check of all the largest dictionaries of Classical Chinese, however, shows that no such term as 'sandy snow' has ever been recorded, and that we must translate the two terms separately, as I have just done. Nor can we posit some confusion between similar Indian words for snow and gold: a recent survey of translation terminology shows that the phrase 'golden sand', though frequent in Chinese translations, derives in all known cases from a compound in which the word for gold is totally dissimilar from that for snow<sup>8</sup>.

7 Daniel Boucher, in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Buddhism in Practice* (Princeton 1995), p.61, giving also a reference to the standard Taishō edition of the text, i.e. Vol.54, No.2125, p.226c, equivalent to *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan*, fasc. 4, section 31. Boucher quotes this passage in his introduction to a full translation of one of the main sources on Buddha images in the Chinese Canon (pp.66–8); his introduction and especially his suggestions for further reading (pp.63–4) contain much that throws light on the aspect of Buddhism described here.

8 See Hirakawa Akira, ed., *Kan-Bon daijiten* (Tokyo 1997), p.1180.

The reasons for this clear anomaly (to continue to use a neutral word) in amongst what would appear to be a list of practices vouched for as authentically South Asian on the basis of observation is, I intend to show you, political, in the sense that it relates to a struggle for state patronage in a situation of inter-religious rivalry in China. Before demonstrating this, however, it is necessary to say a word or two concerning just what that situation was in I-ching's lifetime. As is well known, the T'ang dynasty favoured Taoism over Buddhism for dynastic reasons, and particularly after the death of T'ai-tsung, Hsüan-tsang's imperial patron, his successor seems to have encouraged interreligious debate, perhaps with an eye to bringing Taoism and Buddhism closer together, but ultimately with a view to favouring the former. However, on the death of this ruler, Kao-tsung, in 683, his widow, the famous Empress Wu, who dominated the court, cast about for justifications for her taking over the throne in her own name, and eventually found them in Buddhism, thus giving I-ching's colleagues an unexpected opportunity to establish Buddhism in China against the run of events, which had increasingly exposed Buddhism as alien or irrelevant to Chinese life<sup>9</sup>.

No one has done more to document this reversal in the fortunes of Buddhism than Professor Antonino Forte of the University of Naples, and he has shown in a number of publications not only how Chinese Buddhist monks helped create the necessary propaganda documents, but also how Buddhist monks of foreign origin were pressed into service to support the régime. South Asian Buddhism was of course taken as normative at this time — ascertaining those norms in relation to practice, rather than as hitherto in relation to doctrine, was the whole purpose of I-ching's trip — so Chinese political influence on the process of translation from a South Asian language (by this point invariably

9 An outline of the seventh century history of state religious patronage in China prior to the advent of the Empress Wu as ruler may be gained by consulting S. Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang* (Cambridge 1987), pp.1–36, in conjunction with T.H. Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang* (London 1996), pp.11–40.



Sanskrit) allowed the régime of the Empress to use the authority of Buddhist norms without any of her subjects being aware of this imposture: Forte shows some clear examples of translators who succumbed to political pressure, or rose to the occasion to benefit their religion, depending on the way you look at it<sup>10</sup>. In either case, I am obliged to report that Wang Bangwei, whose excellent annotated editions of I-ching's works certainly deserve publication in English, presents evidence from a later epigraphical catalogue making it quite plain that I-ching himself eventually put his linguistic abilities in the service of the Empress, interpreting an indecipherable excavated text as an omen of divine approval of her rule<sup>11</sup>.

10 For a detailed study of the events leading up to the Empress Wu's declaration of the new dynasty as a Buddhist régime, see Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Naples 1976), and *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock* (Rome 1988); for an excellent case study of political interference in translation, A. Forte, 'The Relativity of the Concept of Orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism', in Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* (Honolulu 1990), pp.239-49, though this concerns the period immediately following the rule of the Empress; note, however, A. Forte, 'Hui-chih, fl. (676-703 A.D.), a Brahmin Born in China', *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale (Napoli)* 45 (1985), pp.105-34, for what appears to be an interesting case of political manipulation by the Empress of a China-based Sanskritist.

11 Wang Bangwei, *Nan-hai chi-kuei nei-fa chuan chiao-chu* (Peking 1995), p.20; p.160 reveals that this information was brought to his attention by another outstanding Chinese expert on Buddhism, Fang Guangchang. The epigraphical evidence is preserved in Chao Ming-ch'eng, *Chin-shih lu*, 25.9b, in the edition of the Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an, series two: this text dates to 1119-25 and contains much important evidence of inscriptions that are now lost. Wang's volume consists of an excellent edition of the text first translated by Takakusu, with a lengthy introduction: the passage given above in our two translations is on pp.173-4. As long ago as 1973 John Brough drew attention to the need to update Takakusu's work, as may be seen from Minoru Hara and J.C. Wright, eds., *John Brough: Collected Papers* (London 1996), pp.249, 260; Wang's work is a major step in this

This event, however, took place in 695, on his return, whereas Wang's scholarship favours 691 as the date of composition of I-ching's writings on India<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps, then, we can exempt these works from the charge of political influence on the grounds of chronology? Unfortunately, this is not possible. In 671, when he set out for India, the threats to Chinese Buddhism would already have been obvious, but not the later opportunity to remedy the situation through appealing to the Empress for patronage. In 689, however, two years after I-ching had already left India to retrace his steps as far as the kingdom of Śrīvijaya, which is thought to have been located somewhere in southeast Sumatra, he did make a trip of a little over three months from his base there to South China<sup>13</sup>. Ostensibly this was an accident — he did not get off a China-bound ship to which he was delivering letters in time before it cast off — but Wang for one suspects a deeper motive<sup>14</sup>. Certainly, matters in China had by then reached a very inter-

direction.

12 Wang Bangwei, *Ta-T'ang Hsi-yü ch'iu-fa kao-seng shuan chiao-chu* (Peking 1988), p.261, in his annalistic biography of I-ching. This is attached to an edition of I-ching's other main work, the collection of biographies of East Asian clerical pilgrims to India first translated by Chavannes, and now also available in English from Latika Lahiri, *Chinese Monks in India* (Delhi 1986). Lahiri's work does not replace that of Chavannes, but she does include a reprinting of the Taishō text, No.2066 in Vol.51.

13 Unfortunately, the history of the region in which I-ching was based is not as well established as that of China: for the current state of our knowledge, see Jan Wisseman Christie, 'State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: a Consideration of the Theories and Data', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151 (1995), pp.235-88, especially pp.262-72. This impressive digest of recent scholarship shows that although we lack the archaeological evidence to pin down the exact location of I-ching's base, thanks to a close reading of his works and similar sources, plus a number of inscriptions, we do know roughly what sort of state it was.

14 Wang, *Ta-T'ang . . . chiao-chu*, p.235, n.60, re. text on p.214. The translation of this passage by Lahiri, *op. cit.*, p.114, does not quite capture the sense.



esting stage, as the Empress was moving towards declaring her own dynasty in the following year, but in my view it was not until the last minute that her patronage was decided in favour of the Buddhists, since there are clear signs that up to this point she was, for lack of any better ideological support for female rule, obliged to present herself solely as a Taoist Holy Mother figure, even though motherhood tied her firmly to the dynastic claims of her sons, whom she wished to supplant<sup>15</sup>. We should doubtless note as well that when in 691 I-ching sent his new writings back to China, the Chinese monk who conveyed them was himself seeking the patronage of the Empress in order to construct a temple in India with Chinese funds<sup>16</sup>. No wonder we learn on reaching the end of Takakusu's translation that I-ching professes his ultimate aim to be identical with that which Forte convincingly ascribes to the Empress from 690 onwards, that of creating a Buddhist 'New Jerusalem' in China to rival India<sup>17</sup>.

In this great undertaking the rôle of the Buddhist snowman might at first seem insignificant, but even so it should not be overlooked. Vital to the work of the Empress was the sanctification of Chinese space, using the spiritual and material technologies of the age: holy image and holy text, both in their different ways holy relics of the Buddha himself<sup>18</sup>. Glancing at the material aspect of image making, it becomes obvious that the list of artistic media supplied by I-ching follows a pattern to some extent already familiar. That well-known 'workshop manual' (to quote an economic historian's description), the *Lotus Sūtra*,

15 Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, pp.40–2, presents the evidence for this view.

16 Lahiri, *op. cit.*, p.103; Wang, *Ta-T'ang . . . chiao-chu*, pp.207–8; see also Ts'ao Shih-pang, *Chung-kuo Fo-chiao i-ching shih lun-chi* (Taipei 1990), pp.213–20, for a study of the background to this.

17 Takakusu, *Record*, p.215, and also earlier, pp.70–1; Wang, *Nan-hai . . . chiao-chu*, pp.242–3, p.94.

18 Some further reading on this topic may be found by consulting the contribution of Boucher, as pointed out in n.7 above.

provides an overlapping list of gold, silver and so forth as permissible substances out of which to form an image of the Buddha<sup>19</sup>. Yet the eighteenth century Japanese scholar-monk and Indologist Jiun (1717–1804), on whose remarkable commentary Takakusu depends heavily in his own translation, while naturally referring to the *Lotus Sūtra* for the value of the Buddhist sandcastle, gives no cross-reference for snow (sandy or otherwise) whatsoever, despite copious quotations from the ample Buddhist literature on the construction of images<sup>20</sup>. This in itself of course amounts to no more than an argument from silence, and I would readily concede that much of I-ching's material, even when not attributed to a named source, derives from identifiable textual material<sup>21</sup>. But the fact remains even so that the only other list I have been able to find so far that legitimates the building of holy

19 The materialistic reading of the *Lotus Sūtra* I derive from Liu Xinru, *Ancient India and Ancient China* (New Delhi 1988), p.96; pp.92–102 set lists of the type which we are considering here within the larger context of conspicuous religious consumption in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York 1976), pp.38–9, translates the scriptural passages in question.

20 Shikō, also known as Jiun, *Nankai kiki naihō den kairan shō*, 4A, pp.189–91 (continuous pagination, pp.219–21), in the edition of *Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho*, Vol.14 (Tokyo 1917), an edition prepared by Takakusu. For Jiun's position in the general history of East Asian Sanskrit studies, see R.H. van Gulik, *Siddham. An Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and Japan* (Nagpur, 1956), pp.133–5, and for the man himself in his own historical context the publications of Paul B. Watt, notably 'Jiun Sonja (1718–1804): A Response to Confucianism within the Context of Buddhist Reform', in Peter Nosco, *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (Princeton 1984), pp.188–214. Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom . . .*, p.39, translates the references to sandcastles on Jiun's p.189.

21 Note the case pointed out by Gregory Schopen, on pp.485–6 of his 'Deaths, Funerals and the Division of Property in a Monastic Code', in Lopez, ed., *Buddhism in Practice*, *op. cit.*, pp.473–502. One might also note with Schopen that here I-ching's ostensible eyewitness account turns out to be nothing of the sort.



snowmen is Chinese, and not even Buddhist, but rather is contained in a Taoist work of the late sixth or early seventh century<sup>22</sup>. And if the Taoists were stealing a march in increasing their spiritual potency by deploying Taoist snowmen, then the Buddhists would have urgently sought or would even have concocted the sanction of Indian tradition to do the same.

Nor is the making of images from snow the only technology that our Taoist list shares solely with I-ching's. It also speaks (to our modern eyes, perhaps, more significantly) of imprinting images on paper or silk. Naturally, the passage in question has attracted the attention of those interested in the history of printing, particularly since imprinting texts on clay — especially the short text I-ching gives us — is so well attested at an even earlier date<sup>23</sup>. But the erudite Paul Pelliot for one was puzzled by the use of these Chinese materials in India and speculated that they had been used for the imprinting of images in China at an earlier date, and that the practice of using these materials had then been exported to India<sup>24</sup>. The great historian of Indo-Chinese relations (and teacher of Wang Bangwei), Ji Xianlin, was also puzzled at the references to paper in I-ching's writings, noting that in two out of the three passages concerned (covering the use of toilet paper and paper in the manufacture of parasols) it was unclear whether conditions in India or elsewhere were being described,

22 T.H. Barrett, 'The *Feng-tao k'o* and Printing on Paper in Seventh century China', BSOAS 60.3 (1997), pp.538–40, is deigned to provide a discussion of this Taoist list and its probable date: it is certainly earlier than I-ching, and the text is certainly cited in polemical Taoist literature by a contemporary of his.

23 Jiun, *Nankai kiki* . . . , 4A, p.189, is probably the earliest scholar to have noted that I-ching constitutes testimony to a form of printing long before the advent of the printed book as a common commodity in Sung times (tenth century onwards). The most up to date standard overview of the development of printing in China is currently that of Tsien Tsuen-hsuei, in Vol.V:1 of Joseph Needham, ed., *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge 1985): I-ching's data on printing are discussed on pp.149 (printing) and 356 (paper).

24 Paul Pelliot, *Les débuts de l'imprimerie en Chine* (Paris 1953), p.18.

though in view of I-ching's mode of expression in the passage I have cited, he felt obliged to accept that images were stamped on paper in India<sup>25</sup>.

He also reasoned that since I-ching had to send home for supplies of paper and ink from South-East Asia (such indeed was the purpose of the letters home which caused his allegedly involuntary temporary return to China), and since there were no indications of the use of paper in that region at such an early date, the use of paper must have spread to India from China's Central Asian domains, which during the seventh century had been temporarily extended to very much their modern limits, to the north-west of India<sup>26</sup>. Though it would seem to be the case that poor quality paper was already being manufactured on the north-west frontier of India, the Taoist evidence allows us to read I-ching differently on the crucial point of whether paper was being used for stamping images on in the regions where he himself travelled<sup>27</sup>. Clay, after all, remained plentiful and was

25 Ji Xianlin, *Chung-Yin wen-hua kuan-hsi shih lun-wen chi* (Peking 1982), p.37. This expanded collection of Ji's essays on Sino-Indian cultural relations adds to his original work on the introduction of paper into India (the essay cited here first appeared in 1954 and was later included in an earlier collection of his essays in 1957) a number of supplementary notices, none of which bears upon the passage that concerns us here. Please note also that my 'Ji Xianlin on the Original Language of Buddhism', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 (1992), pp.83–93, represents no more than an attempt at summarising his comments on K.R. Norman's work; it is not a balanced discussion of the whole impressive range of his achievements.

26 Ji, *Chung-Yin . . . chi*, pp.44–50, reprints from his earlier collection a study amplifying his original arguments for a Central Asian source for Indian knowledge of paper.

27 Jeremy P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London 1982), pp.10–11, shows that some of the famous Gilgit manuscripts of the sixth century were written on a crude form of paper produced from materials in the vicinity, apparently to meet purely local needs, but finds it most improbable that such paper could have displaced traditional writing materials further afield where



sanctioned by tradition. The comparative mobility of the paper image, noted by I-ching, would only have been important in a situation in which distribution was a premium, and this applied solely to China, where the spread of holy objects was vital to the process of sanctifying the entire terrain, in competition with Taoists for whom the terrain of China was already sacred, dotted with sites of great numinous power<sup>28</sup>.

Could this be amongst the reasons why I-ching sailed back westwards again after his visit to the South China coast? His writings needed the authority of composition outside China in order to legitimate the practices described. However, among those practices we should not be surprised to find afterthoughts prompted not by his observations in India but by the need of his Chinese colleagues to be able to compete, in a life or death struggle for patronage, with enemies who had already sponsored two vicious persecutions in the two preceding centuries. In such circumstances the doctrine of expedient means would surely have allowed I-ching a little flexibility in describing Indian norms.

I use the words 'a little' advisedly. I have no doubt, surveying

---

they were in more plentiful supply at this date, and in fact there is no evidence of such a substitution elsewhere until long after I-ching's visit, though (as noted below) we might conclude that I-ching could have heard tell of this use of paper on the fringes of India proper from East Asian pilgrims who had passed through the region of Gilgit. I am indebted to my knowledge of Losty's discussion of the issue to Dr P.F. Kornicki of Cambridge University, who is also working on the early history of printing with a view to a reassessment of the Japanese evidence.

28 The Buddhist sacralisation of Chinese space to compete with the existing Taoist dominance of the Chinese landscape is certainly a phenomenon that requires more extended treatment than can be afforded in a footnote. Some idea of the Taoist view of Chinese space during the late seventh century may be gained from Florian C. Reiter, *Kategorien und Realien im Shang-ch'ing Taoismus* (Wiesbaden 1992), an analysis of a Taoist encyclopaedia of sacred places which mixes (in a fashion which must have been the envy of the Buddhists) heavenly realms and Chinese locations.

the scale of I-ching's achievements, that he was not only a very learned man and a very brave man, but also a very good man. His writings give every indication that he was a moral rigorist rather than an opportunist, let alone a skilled liar. If we wish to redeem his reputation, it may be possible to put his remarks down to a misunderstanding of hearsay evidence (though I doubt this) or even to the presentation of evidence from the 'Serindian' mixed cultural zone of Central Asia (which perhaps at this time may be seen as encompassing even the borderlands of the Indian Northwest Frontier) as purely Indian: his efforts in compiling the biographies of Buddhist travellers from China to India through that zone would have given him ample opportunity to find out about practice there. He gives himself away to a modern reader all too readily, because we know that South-East Asia and India up to the level of the Himalayas are not snowman country, though this would not have been known to the common Chinese reader in his own day. But when we consider what was at stake, surely we can forgive him his trespasses. The Empress, for one, whatever her personal religious commitment, was clearly desperate to find Buddhist sanctions for her rule, and the means for converting China into a Buddhist holy land, since (as we have noted already) the rôle of Holy Mother offered by the Taoists only tied her to the offspring of her late husband and did not allow her to rule in her own right — so no wonder that on I-ching's eventual, official return, she left her palace to greet him as he entered the capital<sup>29</sup>. By legitimating the use of Chinese paper technology for the reproduction of sacred materials, he had put a particularly powerful weapon in the hands of the Chinese

---

29 Wang, *Ta-T'ang . . . chiao-chu*, p.262, citing sources such as Chih-sheng, *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*, 9, p.568b in Taishō, Vol.55, No.2154, which is our earliest account of this from the eighth century. Of course his other contributions, not only scriptures for translation and an image but also 300 granular relics — ideal for distribution across the land as caityas — would also have contributed to the evident decision to afford him the Chinese equivalent of a tickertape welcome home.



Buddhist state.

And if we return once more to our initial comparison with Marco Polo, we may even — at the expense of piling hypothesis upon hypothesis in a way that rules out any chance of reaching a firm conclusion — push matters yet further. If Marco Polo's epic journey in time brought about an important element in the Renaissance — by establishing the lure of Cathay as the target of European voyages of discovery — then I-ching's journey equally may be seen as part of a chain of causation bringing modernity into being. For, by providing the Buddhist justification for the multiplication and distribution of texts and images through printing, he can be said to have prompted the development of Chinese printing to the point where the widespread use of paper for woodblocks paved the way for the somewhat different technology of the Gutenberg revolution.

And if either man had confined himself solely to a dry and completely unembroidered recitation of his observations — let alone if neither had left their own worlds to venture into the unknown — would the world be the same place today? I started these remarks with the suggestion that Indologists engaged in Buddhist Studies might do well to develop an awareness of the problems that their Sinological counterparts have to face in collaborating with them. I shall end with the suggestion that such collaboration, whatever the difficulties, is still a goal worth pursuing — that we could both do worse than unite, for example, in advising historians of technology. For if my interpretation of the function of the passages I have cited is correct, then Buddhist conceptions of truth might well have played a part in what is still all too often taken to be a purely empirical field of research. Such a united front might well prove useful, for if I might hazard one further, final guess, a Buddhist Studies that remains solely of interest to students of Buddhism, without making any contribution to other fields of study, will remain also vulnerable at best to misunderstanding, at worst to continual institutional obstruction in its development. Surely this is the last thing this Association would wish.

(Paper for the UK Association for Buddhist Studies, 1997)

## A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF ÑĀNAVĪRA THERA'S 'A NOTE ON PAṬICCASAMUPPĀDA'

Part Two

Bhikkhu Bodhi

### Saṅkhārā in the PS Formula

14. Let us now turn directly to the Nidāna Saṃyutta to see how the suttas on PS treat the term '*saṅkhārā*' in relation to *avijjā* and *viññāṇa*. As the suttas in this collection that expand upon the stock formula are conveniently few in number, we can take a brief look at each in turn. Of these texts, two establish the two major paradigms for the interpretation of *saṅkhārā*, namely, that formulated in terms of the three doors of volitional action and that formulated in terms of three kammically graded types of volition. Besides these, three additional texts can be found to shed light on the problem. I should stress at once that the Nidāna Saṃyutta incorporates virtually all the shorter discourses of the Buddha dealing with PS and hence should be taken as definitive in its presentation of the meaning and function of the constituent items in the formula.

We will begin with the Bhūmija Sutta, the paradigmatic text for distinguishing *saṅkhārā* by way of the doors of action:

'When there is the body, Ānanda, because of bodily volition there arises internally pleasure and pain. When there is speech, because of verbal volition there arises internally pleasure and pain. When there is the mind, because of mental volition there arises internally pleasure and pain.

'With ignorance as condition, either by oneself, Ānanda, one forms that body-*saṅkhārā* (speech-*saṅkhārā*, mind-*saṅkhārā*) on account of which that pleasure and pain arises internally; or because of others one forms that body-*saṅkhārā* (speech-*saṅkhārā*, mind-*saṅkhārā*) on account of which that pleasure and pain arises internally . . .

'Ignorance is included among these things. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance that



body does not exist (that speech does not exist, that mind does not exist) on account of which that pleasure and pain arises internally<sup>25</sup>.

Here the three *saṅkhārā* that are said to be conditioned by ignorance are explicitly identified with the three types of volition. The sutta employs the term '*manosaṅkhāra*' rather than '*cittasaṅkhāra*', but in the absence of any other exemplification of *cittasaṅkhāra* in the PS context we can take the terms as interchangeable; though such usage is not common it is not totally foreign to the Nikāyas and other instances can be cited of the synonymous use of *citta* and *mano*<sup>26</sup>.

According to the commentary, this volition is to be understood as *kamma*, and the pleasure and pain that arise internally as *vipākavedanā*, as feelings resulting from that *kamma*. A temporal separation between volition and the resulting pleasure and pain may not be explicitly mentioned in the text, but if we read the above passage against the broader background of the Suttas, we can readily infer that an implicit temporal gap is intended. One sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, on the correlations between *kamma* and its fruit, helps us to understand the process by which *saṅkhārā* function as conditions for the arising of pleasant and painful feeling:

'Here, monks, someone forms an afflictive body-*saṅkhāra*, speech-*saṅkhāra*, mind-*saṅkhāra*. Having done so, he is reborn into an afflictive world. When he is reborn there afflictive contacts contact him, and he experiences feelings that are extremely painful. . . Someone forms a non-afflictive body-*saṅkhāra* (etc.) . . . he is reborn into a non-afflictive world. . . Non-afflictive contacts contact him and

25 S 12:25/II 39-40.

26 See, for example, S I 93, 102; II 231, 271, where *kāya*, *vacī*, *citta* (or *cetas*) are used in a context where one would normally expect *kāya*, *vacī*, *mano*. The Buddha also says: *yañ ca vuccati cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇam iti pi* (S II 94).

he experiences feelings that are extremely pleasant. . . Someone forms both an afflictive and a non-afflictive body-*saṅkhāra* (etc.) . . . he is reborn into a world that is both afflictive and non-afflictive. Afflictive and non-afflictive contacts contact him, and he experiences feelings that are both painful and pleasant<sup>27</sup>.

Here the term used is again '*manosaṅkhāra*', and it is clear that the three *saṅkhārā* are primarily of interest because they determine a person's plane of rebirth and the quality of affective experience prevailing in his life. The sutta is not manifestly concerned with PS, but if we examine the sequence of events being described we would find, embedded in it, a segment of the standard PS formula. These events can be represented thus: *saṅkhārā* > rebirth into a world > contact > feeling. From the Mahānidāna Sutta (D 15/II 63) we know that rebirth into any world involves the co-arising of consciousness and name-and-form, and from the latter we can elicit the six sense bases as the condition for contact. This suffices to establish that the above text and the PS formula are defining the same situation, and here it is evident that the *saṅkhārā* serve as condition for the arising of pleasure and pain across the gap of lifetimes.

The last paragraph of the above quotation from the Bhūmija Sutta expresses obliquely the converse side of the relationship. Here, when the Buddha states that with the cessation of ignorance, body, speech and mind no longer serve as conditions for pleasure and pain to arise internally, what is meant is that these doors of action cease to be instruments for generating *saṅkhārā*, actions with the power to produce re-becoming. When ignorance is eliminated, volition no longer functions as *saṅkhārā*, as a constructive power that builds up new edifices of personal existence in future lives. The actions of the arahant, whether performed by body, speech or mind, are *khīṇabīja*, 'with seed destroyed' (Ratana Sutta, Sn 235); they are incapable of ripening in the future, and hence no longer serve as conditions for

27 A II 230-2; see too M I 389.



pleasure and pain to arise.

15. The second major paradigm for understanding the *saṅkhārā* factor in PS, and its relations to *avijjā* and *viññāṇa*, grades the *saṅkhārā* according to their ethical quality, which in turn indicates the type of rebirth they produce. This paradigm is delineated in the following passage:

'Bhikkhus, if a person immersed in ignorance forms a meritorious *saṅkhārā*, consciousness goes on towards merit. If he forms a demeritorious *saṅkhārā*, consciousness goes on towards demerit. If he forms an imperturbable *saṅkhārā*, consciousness goes on towards the imperturbable<sup>28</sup>.

Once again it is obvious that we must understand *saṅkhārā* as volition (*cetanā*). And once again it is not so obvious that the relationship between *saṅkhārā* and consciousness may be a causal one operating across different lives. The commentary to the sutta explains that the phrase 'consciousness goes on towards merit' can be understood in two complementary ways: (i) the kammically active consciousness associated with the volition 'goes on towards' meritorious *kamma*, i.e., it accumulates merit; and (ii) the consciousness resulting from the merit 'goes on towards' the result of merit, i.e., it reaps the fruit of that merit. The same principle of interpretation applies to the other two cases — the demeritorious and the imperturbable. Thus the point of the passage, as understood from the traditional perspective, may be paraphrased thus: A meritorious volition infuses consciousness with a meritorious quality and thereby steers consciousness towards rebirth in a realm resulting from merit; a demeritorious volition infuses consciousness with a demeritorious quality and thereby steers consciousness towards rebirth in a realm resulting from demerit; an imperturbable volition infuses consciousness with an imperturbable quality (*āneñja*) and thereby steers consciousness towards

28 S 12:51/II 82: *Avijjāgato 'yaṃ bhikkhave purisapuggalo puññaṃ ce saṅkhārāṃ abhisāṅkharoti puññūpagāṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ, apuññaṃ ce saṅkhārāṃ abhisāṅkharoti apuññūpagāṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ, āneñjaṃ ce saṅkhārāṃ abhisāṅkharoti āneñjūpagāṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ.*

rebirth in an imperturbable realm, i.e., a realm corresponding to the fourth *jhāna* or the formless meditative attainments.

Ñāṇavīra himself rejects this interpretation of the passage. He writes (§15):

... Nothing in the Sutta suggests that *puññūpaga viññāṇa* is anything other than the meritorious consciousness of one who is determining or intending merit. (When merit is intended by an individual he is conscious of his world as 'world-for-doing-merit-in', and consciousness has thus 'arrived at merit'.)

My reading of this passage differs from that of Ñāṇavīra. Even if we disregard the commentarial explanation sketched above and focus solely on the text, we would find that the structure of the sutta itself suggests that a *kamma-vipāka* relationship is intended by the link between *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. For the sutta continues: When a bhikkhu has abandoned ignorance and aroused knowledge, he does not form any of the three types of *saṅkhārā*. Thereby he reaches arahantship, and when his body breaks up with the ending of his life, he attains Parinibbāna. Thus 'all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here, and bodily elements only will remain'. Hence in its structure the sutta establishes a contrast between the ignorant worldling and the arahant. The worldling, by fashioning meritorious, demeritorious and imperturbable volitions, projects his consciousness into a new existence, setting in motion once again the entire cycle of birth and death. The arahant cuts off ignorance and stops forming *saṅkhārā*, thus ending the projection of consciousness and the consequent renewal of the cycle.

This conclusion can draw further support from a study of how the word '*upaga*' is used in the Suttas. Ñāṇavīra's rendering 'has arrived at' is actually an error: the word functions not as a past participle (that would be *upagata*) but as a suffix signifying present action. Hence I render it 'goes on towards'. In contexts similar to the one cited above (though perhaps not in all contexts) '*upaga*' most commonly denotes movement towards the fruition of one's past *kamma* — movement fulfilled by the process of rebirth. Consider the stock passage on the exercise of the divine eye:



'With the divine eye, which is purified and superhuman, he sees beings passing away and being reborn, inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and he understands how beings go on in accordance with their *kamma*' (*yathākammūpage satte pajānāti*)<sup>29</sup>.

Then consider the *Āneñjasappāya Sutta*, on a bhikkhu who practises the 'imperturbable meditations' without reaching arahantship: 'With the break-up of the body, after death, it is possible that his consciousness, evolving on, may go on towards the imperturbable'<sup>30</sup>. Note that the last expression (*viññāṇam āneñjūpagam*) in the Pāli is identical with the expression found in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* sutta cited above, and here, clearly, a transition from one life to another is involved.

We thus see that in the two main models for the *saṅkhārā* factor of PS presented by the *Nidāna Saṃyutta*, the term signifies volitional activity, and its bearing on consciousness and feeling is that of kammic cause for a fruit generally maturing in a subsequent life. We should further stress that these two models are neither mutually exclusive nor do they concern different material. Rather, they structure the same material — kammically potent volitions — along different lines depending on the perspective adopted: either door of action or ethical quality.

16. Besides these two major models, the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* contains two short suttas that help illuminate the role of *saṅkhārā* in the PS formula. We may begin with the following:

'Bhikkhus, if there is lust, delight, craving for solid food (or any other of the four types of nutriment), consciousness becomes grounded in that and comes to growth. When consciousness is grounded and comes to growth, there is a descent of name-and-form. When there is a descent of name-and-form, there is growth of *saṅkhārā*. When there is

growth of *saṅkhārā*, there is the production of re-becoming in the future. When there is the production of re-becoming in the future, there is future birth, ageing and death' (*āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍḍati*)<sup>31</sup>.

Here we can see that *saṅkhārā* are responsible for bringing about 're-becoming in the future', that is, for generating rebirth. The structure of the sutta is similar to that of the *Bhava Sutta* quoted above (pp.13-14), but here three existences are implied. The first is the existence in which there is craving for food. This craving, accompanied by ignorance, grounds consciousness in its attachment to nutriment. Consciousness — here the kammically active consciousness — is the seed arisen in the old existence that sprouts forth as a new existence, causing a 'descent' of name-and-form into the womb (*nāmarūpassa avakkanti*). Within the second existence the new being, on reaching maturity, engages in volitional activity, which brings on 'the growth of *saṅkhārā*' (*saṅkhārānam vuddhi*). These *saṅkhārā* in turn, enveloped by ignorance and craving, initiate the production of still another existence, the third of the series. This existence (like all others) commences with birth and terminates in ageing and death.

17. Next, let us look at one short sutta in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* which explicitly mentions neither *avijjā* nor *saṅkhārā* but refers to them obliquely:

'What one wills, and what one plans, and what lies latent within — this is a support for the continuance of consciousness. When there is a support, there is a grounding of consciousness. When consciousness is grounded and comes to growth, there is the production of re-becoming in the future. When there is the production of re-becoming in the future, future birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair arise. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering'<sup>32</sup>.

29 E.g. M I 183.

30 M II 262. I follow the Burmese-script ed., which reads *āneñja* where the PTS ed. reads *ānāñja*; the meaning is the same.

31 S 12:64/II 101.

32 S 12:23/II 65. The PTS ed. has mistakenly omitted '*jāti*' from the passage.



In this sutta, *saṅkhārā* are referred to elliptically by the expression '*yaṃ ceteti*', 'what one wills', and '*yaṃ pakappeti*', 'what one plans' ('*pakappeti*' is a rare term, apparently synonymous with '*ceteti*'). The expression '*yaṃ anuseti*', 'what lies latent within', points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjā-nusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*)<sup>33</sup>. Thus the sutta is stating that when one forms volitions on the basis of ignorance and craving, these volitions become the support which grounds consciousness and establishes it in a new existence. Once consciousness becomes so established, it sets in motion the entire production of a new existence, beginning with birth and ending with death, accompanied by all its attendant suffering.

The text which immediately follows the aforementioned sutta in the Nidāna Saṃyutta (S 12:39) begins identically as far as 'and comes to growth', then it continues with 'there is a descent of name-and-form' and the rest of the standard series. This shows that in the PS context 'the descent of name-and-form' (*nāma-rūpassa avakkanti*) is effectively synonymous with 'the production of re-becoming in the future' (*āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥ-batti*). Both signify the unfolding of the rebirth process once consciousness has gained a foothold in the new existence.

18. The above analysis should be sufficient to establish with reasonable certainty that the term '*saṅkhārā*' in the PS formula denotes nothing other than volition (*cetanā*), and that volition enters into the formula because it is the factor primarily responsible for 'grounding' consciousness in the round of repeated becoming and for driving it into a new form of existence in the future. When this much is recognised, it becomes unnecessary for me to say anything about the continuation of Nāṇavīra's Note on PS from §18 to the end. This convoluted discussion rests upon his assumption that the term '*saṅkhārā*' in the PS formula comprises all the varieties of *saṅkhārā* spoken of in the Suttas, that is, all

things that other things depend on. By adopting this thesis he finds himself obliged to explain how such things as the in-and-out breaths, etc., can be said to be conditioned by ignorance and to be conditions for consciousness. The explanation he devises may be ingenious, but as it receives no confirmation from the Suttas themselves, we can conclude that his account does not correctly represent the Buddha's intention in expounding the teaching of PS.

19. At this point we can pull together the main threads of our discussion. We have seen that the alternative, 'more satisfactory approach' to PS that Nāṇavīra proposes rests on two planks: one is his interpretation of the nexus of *bhava*, *jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa*, and the other his interpretation of the nexus of *avijjā*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. The first hinges on ascribing to all three terms meanings that cannot be substantiated by the texts. The second involves a merging of two contexts that the texts rigorously keep separate, namely, the PS context and the definition of the three *saṅkhārā* stated in connection with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling (found in the Cūḷavedalla Sutta). This error leads Nāṇavīra to assign to the term *saṅkhārā* in the PS context a much wider meaning than the texts allow. It also induces him to overlook various passages from the Suttas that clearly show that *saṅkhārā* in the PS formula must always be understood as volitional activities, considered principally by way of their role in projecting consciousness into a new existence in the future.

20. To round off this portion of my critique, I would like to take a quick look at a short sutta in the Nidāna Saṃyutta — a terse and syntactically tricky text — that confirms the three-life interpretation of PS almost as explicitly as one might wish. Our text — the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta — opens thus:

'Bhikkhus, for the fool, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has thereby been obtained. Hence there is this body and external name-and-form: thus this dyad. Dependent on the dyad there is contact. There are just six sense bases, contacted through which — or through a certain one of them — the fool experiences pleasure and pain'.

33 See M I 109–10, 393, etc.



Exactly the same thing is said regarding the wise man. The Buddha then asks the monks to state the difference between the two, and when the monks defer, the Master continues:

'For the fool, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has been obtained. But for the fool that ignorance has not been abandoned and that craving has not been eliminated. Why not? Because the fool has not lived the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering. Therefore, with the break-up of the body, the fool is one who goes on to (another) body. Being one who goes on to (another) body, he is not freed from birth, from ageing and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; he is not freed from suffering, I say'<sup>34</sup>.

The wise man, in contrast, having lived the holy life to the full, has abandoned ignorance and eliminated craving. Thus with the break-up of the body he is not one who goes on to another body, and thus he is freed from birth, ageing, death, etc.; he is freed from all kinds of suffering.

Having been included in the Nidāna Samyutta, this sutta must be an exemplification of PS, otherwise it would have had no place in that collection. And we can detect, with minor variants and elisions, the main factors of the classical formula. Yet not only are three lifetimes explicitly depicted, but we also find two basic exegetical tools of the Commentaries already well pre-figured: the three links (*tiśandhi*) and the four groups (*catusaṅkhepa*)<sup>35</sup>. The first group — the causal factors of the past life — are the ignorance and craving that brought both the fool and the wise man into the present existence; though *saṅkhārā* are not mentioned, they are implied by the mention of ignorance. The first link — that between past causes and present results — connects past ignorance and craving with 'this body'. This, obviously, is a conscious body (*saṁvīṇāṇaka kāya*), implying *viññāna*. The text mentions the remaining factors of the present resultant

group: *nāmarūpa*, *saḷāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*. Then in the case of the fool, a link takes place between the present resultant group — epitomised by the experience of pleasure and pain — and the present causal group productive of a future life. This group is represented by the present *avijjā* and *taṇhā* that the fool has not discarded. We also know, despite the elision, that *taṇhā* will lead to *upādāna* and a fresh surge of volitional activity motivated by clinging (the *kammabhava* of the Commentaries).

Because of his *avijjā* and *taṇhā* the fool 'goes on to another body' (*kāyūpago hoti*) — note that here we meet once again the word *upaga* which I discussed above (§15), again in connection with the rebirth process. The 'going on to (another) body' can be seen as loosely corresponding to *punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti*, which is followed by birth, ageing and death, etc. These last factors are the fourth group, future effects, linked to the third group, the present-life causes. Thus in this short sutta, which fills out the bare-bones standard formula with some strips of flesh, however lean, we can discern the exegetical tools of the Commentaries already starting to take shape.

### In Defence of Tradition

21. Now we can return to the opening section of Nāṇavīra's 'A Note on Paṭiccasamuppāda' and examine his criticisms of the traditional interpretation.

In §3 he argues against the commentarial view that *vedanā* in the standard PS formula must be restricted to *kammavipāka*. For proof to the contrary he appeals to the Sīvaka Sutta (S 36:21/IV 230-1), in which the Buddha mentions eight causes of bodily pain, of which only the last is *kammavipāka*. On the traditional interpretation, Nāṇavīra says, this would limit the application of PS to certain bodily feelings but would exclude other types of feeling. Such a view, he holds, is contradicted by the Buddha's unrestricted declaration that pleasure and pain are dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppannam kho āvuso sukhadukkham vuttam bhagavatā*; S II 38).

This objection in no way overturns the traditional view of dependent arising. It should first be pointed out that the notion of PS has a twofold significance, as Nāṇavīra himself recognises in

34 S 12:19/II 23-4.

35 See Vism XVII, 288-9.



his Note (§18). The notion refers both to a structural principle, i.e. the principle that things arise in dependence on conditions, and it refers to various exemplifications of that structural principle, the most common being the twelvefold formula. Once we call attention to this distinction, the traditional interpretation is easily vindicated: All feelings are dependently arisen insofar as they arise from conditions, principally from contact along with such conditions as sense faculty, object, consciousness, etc. This, however, does not require that all feelings be included in the *vedanā* factor of the standard PS formula. Without violating the structural principle that all feeling is dependently arisen, the Commentaries can consistently confine this factor to the feelings that result from previous *kamma*.

While recognising that the Pāli Commentaries do restrict *vedanā* in the standard PS formula to *vipākavedanā*, we might suggest another line of interpretation different from the commentarial one, a line which is less narrow yet still respects the view that the PS formula describes a process extending over successive lives. On this view, rather than insist that the *vedanā* link be understood literally and exclusively as specific resultant feelings born of specific past *kamma*, we might instead hold that the *vedanā* link should be understood as the result of past *kamma* only in the more general sense that the capacity for experiencing feeling is a consequence of obtaining a sentient organism through the force of past *kamma*<sup>36</sup>. That is, it is past *kamma*, accompanied by ignorance and craving, that brought into being the present sentient organism equipped with its six sense bases through which feeling is experienced. If this view is adopted, we can hold that the capacity for experiencing feeling — the obtaining of a psycho-physical organism (*nāmarūpa*) with its six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) — is the product of past *kamma*, but we need not hold that every feeling comprised in the *vedanā* link is the fruit of a particular past *kamma*. The predominant feeling-tone of a given existence will be a direct result of specific

*kamma*, but it would not necessarily follow that every passively experienced feeling is actual *vipāka*. This would allow us to include all feeling within the standard PS formula without deviating from the governing principle of the traditional interpretation that the five links, from consciousness through feeling, are fruits of past *kamma*. Although the Commentaries do take the hard line that feeling in the PS formula is *kamma-vipāka* in the strict sense, this 'softer' interpretation is in no way contradicted by the Suttas. Both approaches, however, concur in holding that the five above-mentioned factors in any given life result from the ignorance, craving and volitional activity of the previous life.

22. In the next section (§4) Nāṇavīra warns us that 'there is a more serious difficulty regarding feeling' posed by the traditional interpretation. He refers to a sutta (A 3:61/I 176) in which, he says, three types of feeling — *somanassa* (joy), *domanassa* (sorrow) and *upekkhā* (equanimity) — 'are included in *vedanā*, in the specific context of the PS formulation'. These three feelings, he continues, necessarily involve *cetanā*, intention or volition, as intrinsic in their structure, and therefore the Commentary must either exclude them from *vedanā* in the PS formulation or else must regard them as *vipāka*. Both horns of this dilemma, Nāṇavīra contends, are untenable: the former, because it contradicts the sutta (which, he says, includes them under *vedanā* in the PS context); the latter, because reflection establishes that these feelings involve *cetanā* and thus cannot be *vipāka*.

The Pāli Commentaries, which adopt the Abhidhamma classification of feeling, hold that *somanassa*, *domanassa* and *upekkhā* — in the present context — are kammically active rather than resultant feelings. This would exclude them from the *vedanā* factor of the PS formulation, which Nāṇavīra claims contradicts the sutta under discussion. But if we turn to the sutta itself, as he himself urges, we will find that the section dealing with these three types of feeling does *not* have any discoverable connection with PS, and it is perplexing that Nāṇavīra should assert it does. PS is introduced later in the sutta, but the section where these three types of feeling are mentioned is not related to any formulation of PS at all. The entire passage reads as follows:

36 In this connection, see the passage from S 12:19 quoted just above.



"These eighteen mental examinations, monks, are the Dhamma taught by me . . . not to be denied by wise recluses and brahmins". Such has been said. And with reference to what was this said? Having seen a form with the eye, one examines a form that is a basis for joy, one examines a form that is a basis for sadness, one examines a form that is a basis for equanimity. (The same is repeated for the other five senses.) It is with reference to this that it was said: "These eighteen mental examinations, monks, are the Dhamma taught by me . . . not to be denied by wise recluses and brahmins"<sup>37</sup>.

And that is it. Thus 'the more serious difficulty regarding feeling' that Nāṇavīra sees in the commentarial interpretation turns out to be no difficulty at all, but only his own strangely careless misreading of the passage.

23. In the same paragraph he derides the commentarial notion that *nāmarūpa* in the PS formulation is *vipāka*. He points out that *nāma* includes *cetanā*, volition or intention, and this leads the Commentary to speak of *vipākacetanā*: 'But the Buddha has said (A 6:63/III 415) that *kamma* is *cetanā* (action is intention), and the notion of *vipākacetanā*, consequently, is a plain self-contradiction'.

Here again the commentarial position can easily be defended. The Buddha's full statement should be considered first:

'It is volition, monks, that I call *kamma*. Having willed (or intended), one does *kamma* by body, speech or mind'<sup>38</sup>.

The Buddha's utterance does not establish a mathematical equivalence between *cetanā* and *kamma* such that every instance of volition must be considered *kamma*. As the second part of his

37 It is possible that Nāṇavīra was misled here by the word '*paṭicca*', which in this context does not refer to *paṭiccasamuppāda* at all, but has the meaning 'with reference to' or 'because of' and refers to the reason for the Buddha's statement.

38 *Cetanā 'haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā.*

statement shows, his words mean that *cetanā* is the decisive factor in action, that which motivates action and confers upon action the ethical significance intrinsic to the idea of *kamma*. This implies that the ethical evaluation of a deed is to be based on the *cetanā* from which it springs, so that a deed has no kammic efficacy apart from the *cetanā* to which it gives expression. This statement does not imply that *cetanā* (in the non-arahant) is always and invariably *kamma*.

In order to see that the notion of *vipākacetanā* is not self-contradictory nor even unintelligible, we need only consider the statements occasionally found in the Suttas about *nāmarūpa* descending into the womb or taking shape in the womb (e.g. D II 63; also §17 above). It is undeniable that the *nāmarūpa* that 'descends' into the womb is the result of past *kamma*, hence *vipāka*. Yet this *nāma* includes *cetanā*, and thus that *cetanā* too must be *vipāka*. Further, the Suttas establish that *cetanā*, as the chief factor in the fourth aggregate (the *saṅkhārakkhandha*), is present on every occasion of experience. A significant portion of experience is *vipāka*, and thus the *cetanā* intrinsic to this experience must also be *vipāka*. When one experiences feeling as the result of past *kamma*, the *cetanā* co-existing with that feeling must be *vipāka* too. The Commentaries squarely confront the problem of *cetanā* in resultant states of consciousness and explain how this *cetanā* can perform the distinct function of *cetanā* without constituting *kamma* in the common sense of the word. (See Atthasālinī, pp.87-8; *The Expositor* (PTS trans.), pp.116-17.)

### The Problem of Time

24. The main reason for Nāṇavīra's dissatisfaction with the traditional interpretation of PS emerges in §7 of his Note. The traditional view regards the PS formula as describing a sequence spread over three lives, hence as involving succession in time. For Nāṇavīra this view closes off the prospect of an immediate ascertainment that one has reached the end of suffering. He argues that since I cannot see my past life or my future life, the three-life interpretation of PS removes a significant part of the formula from my immediate sphere of vision. Thus, PS becomes 'something that, in part at least, must be taken on trust'. But



because PS is designed to show the prospect for a present solution to the present problem of existential anxiety, it must describe a situation that pertains entirely to the present. Hence Nāṇavīra rejects the view of PS as a description of the rebirth process and instead takes it to define an ever-present existential structure of the unenlightened consciousness.

The examination of the suttas on PS that we have undertaken above has confirmed that the usual twelve-term formula applies to a succession of lives. This conclusion must take priority over all deductive arguments against temporal succession in PS. The Buddha's Teaching certainly does show us the way to release from existential anxiety. Since such anxiety, or agitation (*pari-tassanā*), depends on clinging, and clinging involves the taking of things to be 'mine', 'what I am', 'my self', the elimination of clinging will bring the eradication of anxiety. The Buddha offers a method of contemplation that focuses on things as *anattā*, as 'not mine', 'not I', 'not my self'. Realisation of the characteristic of *anattā* removes clinging, and with the elimination of clinging anxiety is removed, including existential anxiety over our inevitable ageing and death. This, however, is not the situation being described by the PS formula, and to read the one in terms of the other is to engage in an unjustifiable confounding of distinct frames of reference.

25. From his criticism of the three-life interpretation of PS it appears that Nāṇavīra entertains a mistaken conception of what it would mean to see PS within the framework of three lives. He writes (§7):

Now it is evident that the twelve items, *avijjā* to *jarāmarana*, cannot, if the traditional interpretation is correct, all be seen at once; for they are spread over three successive existences. I may, for example, see present *viññāṇa* to *vedanā*, but I cannot now see the *kamma* of the past existence — *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* — that (according to the traditional interpretation) was the cause of these present things. Or I may see *tanhā* and so on, but I cannot now see the *jāti* and *jarāmarana* that will result from these things in the next existence.

In Nāṇavīra's view, on the traditional interpretation, in order to see PS properly I would have to be able to see the *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* of my past life that brought about this present existence, and I would also have to be able to see the birth, ageing and death I will undergo in a future existence as a result of my present craving. Since such direct perception of the past and future is not, according to the Suttas, an integral part of every noble disciple's range of knowledge, he concludes that the traditional interpretation is unacceptable.

Reflection would show that the consequences that Nāṇavīra draws do not necessarily follow from the three-life interpretation. To meet his argument, let us first remember that the Commentaries do not treat the twelvefold formula of PS as a rigid series whose factors are assigned to tightly segregated time-frames. The formula is regarded, rather, as an expository device spread over three lives in order to demonstrate the self-sustaining internal dynamics of saṃsāric becoming. The situation defined by the formula is in actuality not a simple linear sequence, but a more complex process by which ignorance, craving and clinging in unison generate renewed becoming in a direction determined by the *saṅkhārā*, the kammically potent volitional activity. Any new existence begins with the simultaneous arising of *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*, culminating in birth, the full manifestation of the five aggregates. With these aggregates as the basis, ignorance, craving and clinging, again working in unison, generate a fresh store of *kamma* productive of still another becoming, and so the process goes on until ignorance and craving are eliminated.

Hence to see and understand PS within the framework of the three-life interpretation is not a matter of running back mentally into the past to recollect the specific causes in the past life that brought about the present existence, nor of running ahead mentally into the next life to see the future effects of the present causal factors. To see PS effectively is, rather, to see that ignorance, craving and clinging have the inherent power to generate renewed becoming, and then to understand, on this basis, that present existence must have been brought to pass through the ignorance, craving and clinging of the past existence, while any uneradicated ignorance, craving and clinging will engender a new



existence in the future. Although the application of the PS formula involves temporal extension over a succession of lives, what one sees with immediate vision is not the connection between *particular events* in the past, present and future, but conditional relationships obtaining between *types of phenomena*: that phenomena of a given type B arise in necessary dependence on phenomena of type A, that phenomena of a given type C arise in necessary dependence on phenomena of type B.

Of these relationships, the most important is the connection between craving and re-becoming. Craving, underlaid by ignorance and fortified by clinging, is the force that originates new existence and thereby keeps the wheel of Saṃsāra in motion. This is already implied by the stock formula of the second Noble Truth: 'And what, monks, is the origin of suffering? It is craving, which produces re-becoming (*taṇhā ponobhavikā*). . .'. The essential insight disclosed by the PS formula is that any given state of existence has arisen through prior craving, and that uneradicated craving has the inherent power to generate new becoming. Once this single principle is penetrated, the entire twelvefold series follows as a matter of course.

26. Nāṇavīra implicitly attempts to marshal support for his non-temporal interpretation of PS by quoting as the epigraph to his 'A Note on Paṭiccasamuppāda' the following excerpt from the Cūḷasakuludāyī Sutta:

'But, Udāyī, let be the past, let be the future, I shall set you forth the Teaching: "When there is this, that is; with arising of this, that arises; when there is not this, that is not; with cessation of this, that ceases"<sup>39</sup>.

Here, apparently, the Buddha proposes the abstract principle of conditionality as an alternative to teachings about temporal matters relating to the past and future. Since in other suttas the statement of the abstract principle is immediately followed by the entire twelve-term formula, the conclusion seems to follow that

any application of temporal distinctions to PS, particularly the attempt to see it as extending to the past and future, would be a violation of the Buddha's intention.

This conclusion, however, would be premature, and if we turn to the sutta from which the quotation has been extracted we would see that the conclusion is actually unwarranted. In the sutta the non-Buddhist wanderer Sakuludāyī tells the Buddha that recently one famous teacher had been claiming omniscience, but when he approached this teacher — who turns out to have been the Jain leader Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta — and asked him a question about the past, the teacher had tried to evade the question, to turn the discussion aside, and became angry and resentful. He expresses the trust that the Buddha is skilled in such matters. The Buddha then says: 'One who can recollect his previous births back for many aeons might engage with me in a fruitful discussion about matters pertaining to the past, while one who has knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings might engage with me in a fruitful discussion about matters pertaining to the future'. Then, since Udāyī has neither such knowledge, at this point the Buddha states: 'But, Udāyī, let be the past, let be the future', and he cites the abstract principle of conditionality. Thus the purport of the Buddha's statement, read as a whole, is that without such super-knowledges of the past and the future, there is no point discussing specific empirical factual matters concerning the past and the future. The Buddha's dismissal of these issues by no means implies that the twelve-fold formula of dependent arising should not be understood as defining the conditional structure of Saṃsāra. It must also be remembered that their discussion takes place with a non-Buddhist ascetic who has not yet gained confidence in the Buddha. It would thus not have been appropriate for the Buddha to reveal to him profound matters that could be penetrated only by one of mature wisdom.

Nāṇavīra tries to buttress his non-temporal interpretation of PS with a brief quotation from the Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta. In that sutta, at the end of a long catechism that explores the twelvefold series of PS in both the order of origination and the order of cessation, the Buddha says to the monks:

39 M 79/II 32.



'I have presented you, monks, with this Dhamma that is visible (*sandiṭṭhika*), immediate (*akālika*), inviting one to come and see, leading onwards, to be personally realised by the wise'<sup>40</sup>.

Ñāṇavīra supposes that 'this Dhamma' refers to *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and that the description of it as *akālika* must mean that the entire formula defines a non-temporal configuration of factors.

If we turn to the sutta from which the quotation comes, we would find that Ñāṇavīra's supposition is directly contradicted by the sequel to the statement on which he bases his thesis. In that sequel (M I 265-70), the Buddha proceeds to illustrate the abstract terms of the PS formula, first with an account of the life process of the blind worldling who is swept up in the forward cycle of origination, and then with an account of the noble disciple, who brings the cycle to a stop. Here temporal succession is in evidence throughout the exposition. The life process begins with conception in the womb (elsewhere expressed as 'the descent of consciousness' into the womb and the 'taking shape of name-and-form' in the womb — D II 63). After the period of gestation comes birth, emergence from the mother's womb, followed in turn by: the gradual maturation of the sense faculties (= the six sense bases), exposure to the five cords of sensual pleasure (= contact), intoxication with pleasant feelings (= feeling), seeking delight in feelings (= craving). Then come clinging, becoming, birth, and ageing and death. Here a sequence of two lives is explicitly defined, while the past life is implied by the *gandhabba*, cited as one of the conditions for conception of the embryo to occur. The *gandhabba* or 'spirit', other texts indicate (see M II 157), is the stream of consciousness of a deceased person coming from the preceding life, and this factor is just as essential to conception as the sexual union of the parents, which it must utilise as its vehicle for entering the womb.

In the contrasting passage on the wise disciple, we see how an individual who has taken birth through the same past causes

goes forth as a monk in the Buddha's dispensation, undertakes the training, and breaks the link between feeling and craving. Thereby he puts an end to the future renewal of the cycle of becoming. By extinguishing 'delight in feelings', a manifestation of craving, he terminates clinging, becoming, birth, ageing and death, and thereby arrives at the cessation of the entire mass of suffering. Thus here, in the very sutta from which the description of PS as 'timeless' is drawn, we see the sequence of PS factors illustrated in a way that indubitably involves temporal succession.

27. In order to determine what the word *akālika* means in relation to PS, we need to take a careful look at its contextual usage in the suttas on PS. Such suttas are rare, but in the Nidāna Samyutta we find one text that can help resolve this problem for us. In this sutta, the Buddha enumerates forty-four 'cases of knowledge' arranged into eleven tetrads. There is knowledge of each factor of PS from *jarāmaraṇa* back to *saṅkhārā*, each defined according to the standard definitions; then there is knowledge of its origination through its condition, of its cessation through the cessation of its condition, and of the Noble Eightfold Path as the way to cessation. With respect to each tetrad, the Buddha says (taking the first as an example):

'When the noble disciple understands thus ageing-and-death, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation, this is his knowledge of the principle (or law: *dhamme nāṇa*). By means of this principle which is seen, understood, *akālika*, attained, fathomed, he applies the method to the past and the future. When he does so, he knows: "Whatever recluses and brahmins in the past understood ageing-and-death (etc.), all understood them as I do now; whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will understand ageing-and-death (etc.), all will understand them as I do now". This is his knowledge of the consequence (*anvaye nāṇa*)'<sup>41</sup>.

40 M 38/I 265.

41 S 12:33/II 56-9.



If we consider the word *akālika* as employed here, the meaning cannot be 'non-temporal' in the sense either that the items conjoined by the conditioning relationship occur simultaneously or that they altogether transcend temporal differentiation. For the same sutta defines birth and death with the stock formulas — 'birth' into any of the orders of beings, etc., 'death' as the passing away from any of the orders of beings, etc. (see §7 above). Surely these events, birth and death, cannot be either simultaneous or extra-temporal. But the word *akālika* is here set in correlation with a series of words signifying knowledge, and this gives us the key to its meaning. Taken in context, the word qualifies, not the factors such as birth and death themselves, but the principle (*dhamma*) that is seen and understood. The point made by calling the principle *akālika* is that this principle is known and seen *immediately*, that is, that the conditional relationship between any two terms is known directly with perceptual certainty<sup>42</sup>. Such immediate knowledge is contrasted with knowledge of the consequence, or inferential knowledge, by which the disciple does not grasp a principle by immediate insight but by reflection on what the principle entails.

Exactly the same conclusion regarding the meaning of *akālika* would follow if we return to the passage from M I 265 quoted above (see §26) and examine it more closely in context. We would then see that the Buddha does *not* link the statement that the Dhamma is *sandiṭṭhiko akāliko* to the formulation of PS in any way that suggests the factors or their relationships are non-temporal. The statement does not even follow immediately upon the catechism on PS. Rather, after questioning the monks in detail about the PS formula, the Buddha asks them whether they would speak as they do (i.e., affirming the connections established

by the formula) merely out of respect for him as their Teacher; the monks answer in the negative. He then asks, 'Isn't it the case that you speak only of what you have known for yourselves, seen for yourselves, understood for yourselves?'<sup>43</sup> To this the monks reply, 'Yes, venerable sir'. At this point the Buddha says: 'I have presented you, monks, with this Dhamma that is visible, immediate, . . . to be personally realised by the wise'. Each of the terms of this stock formula conveys, from a slightly different angle, the same essential idea: that the Dhamma is something that is fully accessible to cognition, that it can be seen directly, immediately, personally, indubitably. These terms highlight, not the intrinsic character of the Dhamma, but its relation to our capacity for knowledge and understanding. They are all epistemological in import, concerned with how the Dhamma is to be known, not with the temporal status of the known. Again, the conclusion is established: The Dhamma (inclusive of PS) is *akālika* because it is to be known immediately by direct inspection, not by inference or by faith in the word of another.

Thus, although birth and death may be separated by seventy or eighty years, one ascertains immediately that death occurs in dependence on birth and cannot occur if there is no birth. Similarly, although the ignorance and *saṅkhārā* that bring about the descent of consciousness into the womb are separated from that consciousness by a gap of lifetimes, one ascertains immediately that the descent of consciousness into the womb has come about through ignorance and *saṅkhārā*. And again, although future becoming, birth, and ageing and death are separated from present craving and clinging by a gap of lifetimes, one ascertains immediately that if craving and clinging persist until the end of the lifespan, they will bring about re-conception, and hence engender a

42 It might even be maintained that the word *akālika* here functions as an 'adverb of manner' qualifying the following past participle *pattana*. The word would then define the way in which the disciple understands the teaching: he has 'attained' (i.e., understood) dependent arising immediately. The use of the instrumental case to signify adverbs of manner is well attested in Pāli.

43 *Nanu bhikkhave yad tumhākaṃ sāmāṃ nātāṃ diṭṭhaṃ viditaṃ tad eva tumhe vadethā ti*. It should be noted that the three past participles used here all appear in the sutta passage on the forty-four cases of knowledge: all that is missing is *akālikena pattana*, but the sense of this is supplied by the declaration to follow, i.e., that the Dhamma is *akālika*.



future cycle of becoming. It is in this sense that the Buddha declares PS to be *sandiṭṭhika*, *akālika* — 'directly visible, immediate' — not in the sense that the terms of the formula have nothing to do with time or temporal succession.

### The Knowledge of Final Deliverance

28. I will conclude this critique by highlighting one particularly disquieting consequence entailed by Nāṇavīra's assertion that PS has nothing to do with rebirth, with temporal succession, or with *kamma* and its fruit. Now the Suttas indicate that the arahants know that they have terminated the succession of births; this is their knowledge and vision of final deliverance (*vimuttiñāna-dassana*). Everywhere in the texts we see that when they attain liberation, they exclaim: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more (coming back) to this world', or: 'This is my last birth; now there is no more re-becoming'. These statements, found throughout the Canon, indicate that the arahants know for themselves that they are liberated from the round of rebirths.

Investigation of the texts will also show that the ground for the arahant's assurance regarding his liberation is his knowledge of PS, particularly in the sequence of cessation. By seeing in himself the destruction of the *āsavas*, the 'cankers' of sensual craving, craving for becoming, and ignorance, the arahant knows that the entire series of factors mentioned in PS has come to an end: ignorance, craving, clinging and kammically potent volitional activities have ended in this present life, and no more compound of the five aggregates, subject to birth and death, will arise in the future. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the *Kālāra Sutta* (S 12:32/II 51-3). When the Buddha asks Venerable Sāriputta how he can declare 'Destroyed is birth', he replies in terms of the destruction of its cause, *bhava*, and the Buddha's questioning leads him back along the chain of conditions to *vedanā*, for which he no longer has any craving.

Since knowledge of PS in its aspect of cessation is the basis for the arahant's knowledge that he has destroyed birth and faces no more re-becoming in the future, if this formula does not describe the conditional structure of *Samsāra* it is difficult to see

how the arahant could have definite knowledge that he has reached the end of *Samsāra*. If arahants have to accept it on trust from the Buddha that *Samsāra* exists and can be terminated (as Nāṇavīra would hold of those arahants who lack knowledge of past births), then those arahants would also have to accept it on trust from the Buddha that they have attained release from *Samsāra*. Such a denouement to the entire quest for the Deathless would be far from satisfactory indeed.

29. It seems that Nāṇavīra, in his eagerness to guarantee an immediate solution to the present problem of existential anxiety, has arrived at that solution by closing off the door to a direct ascertainment that one has solved the existential problem that the Suttas regard as paramount, namely, the *beginningless* problem of our *beginningless* bondage to *Samsāra*. Fortunately, however, the Suttas confirm that the noble disciple does have direct knowledge that all beings bound by ignorance and craving dwell within beginningless *Samsāra*, and that the destruction of ignorance brings cessation of becoming, *Nibbāna*. Consider how Sāriputta explains the faculty of understanding (and I stress that this is the faculty of *understanding* (*paññindriya*), not the faculty of faith):

'When, lord, a noble disciple has faith, is energetic, has set up mindfulness and has a concentrated mind, it can be expected that he will understand thus: "This *Samsāra* is without discoverable beginning; no first point can be discerned of beings roaming and wandering on, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving. But with the remainderless fading away and ceasing of ignorance, a mass of darkness, this is the peaceful state, this is the sublime state: the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, *Nibbāna*". That understanding, lord, is his faculty of understanding<sup>44</sup>.

The Buddha not only applauds this statement with the words 'Sādhu, sādhu!' but to certify its truth he repeats Sāriputta's words in full.

© 1995 Bhikkhu Bodhi



## GOTAMA THE PHYSICIAN: DHAMMA, SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

David Evans

Work by Professor Gombrich revising Gotama Buddha's dates forward some sixty to eighty years has recently been summarised in an article<sup>1</sup> which offers a new list of contemporaries on that basis, among them the legendary founder of Western medicine, Hippocrates of Cos. It therefore seems opportune to explore the significance of medical analogies in the Nikāyas which, I shall argue, take us to the very roots of primitive Buddhism and also illuminate broader questions regarding the relationship between Buddhism and science. At the same time they cast sidelights on conclusions drawn by Peter Harvey in a previous issue of this journal<sup>2</sup>. I shall therefore organise my comments under three headings along those lines.

### The Nikāyas and Early Western Medicine

At one point in the texts<sup>3</sup> Gotama declares '...wearing my last body, incomparable physician and surgeon am I, with almost equal claims made elsewhere for those enlightened under his tutelage. The use of physical afflictions, particularly wounds, as metaphors for moral and spiritual defects is common, and the training is also compared to a purge<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, since *dukkha* embraces 'all the ills that flesh is heir to', those of the body are addressed in their own right. A complete discourse is given over to 'mindfulness of body' requiring its systematic observation in terms of the four elements and more detailed anatomy. Finally,

one can mention a very interesting passage where there is reference to sufferings which are not due to *kamma*, i.e. 'sufferings originating from bile. . .from phlegm, from wind, from changes of the seasons, from stress of untoward happenings, from sudden attacks from without'<sup>5</sup>.

Medical comparisons and some direct overlap of interest are therefore to be found throughout the Nikāyas, but a search for resemblances at a deeper level calls for a source of information from primitive medicine itself and the Hippocratic Treatises are the obvious choice. These are a considerable body of texts and roughly contemporaneous with the Nikāyas, though since they are the product of the whole school and not just its founder there is a large diversity of opinion within them.

The Treatises are often held to represent the beginnings of a systematic approach to diagnosis and this serves as a reminder that Gotama's *ariyan* truths take the form of a complete clinical procedure — condition, source, cure, treatment. The secondary level of analysis of the Truths (as conveniently set out on p.120 of Harvey's article) would also seem to be as applicable in strictly clinical terms as in the context of an existential philosophy. The course and symptoms of a disease need to be 'completely known' (like the First Truth) in order for there to be confidence about the diagnosis; the cause needs to be found and 'given up', i.e. eradicated (like the Second Truth); a cure needs to be 'realised' (Third Truth) and treatments need to be 'developed' (Fourth Truth).

In both collections there is the strongest emphasis on the search for causal connections. Introducing Chadwick and Mann's translations of the Treatises<sup>6</sup>, G.E.R. Lloyd states 'So far as the enquiry into Nature is concerned, it so happens that both the distinction between cause and coincidence, and the idea that every effect has a cause are first clearly expressed in medical

1 R. Dissanayake, 'Revising the Historical Dates of the Buddha', *The Middle Way* 70, 3 (1995), pp.177-80.

2 P. Harvey, 'Contemporary Characterisations of the "Philosophy" of Nikāyan Buddhism', *BSR* 12, 2 (1995), pp.109-33.

3 *Itivuttaka* 100.

4 *A V* 218.

5 *S IV* 230.

6 G.E.R. Lloyd, ed., *Hippocratic Writings*, tr. Chadwick and Mann, Penguin Classics, 1983.



writers<sup>7</sup>. At about the same time Gotama was telling his monks 'because of that this is, if that were not this would not be, from the ending of that is the ending of this'<sup>8</sup>, whilst elsewhere cautioning Ānanda against assuming that causal connections were easily determined<sup>9</sup>. The caution would certainly have been echoed by the Greek physicians.

The word 'coincidence' in the above quote is of great interest. Whereas the Treatises were vitally concerned with the likely course of an illness (one text is simply called 'Prognosis'), the Nikāyas focus with equal intensity on the consequences of behaviour. As seen in the reference to 'sufferings originating from bile' etc. (above) it was clearly recognised from time to time that not all misfortune could be rationalised in terms of *kamma*. However, the doctors had much the easier task in this respect since, by means of careful case notes, they could learn to recognise what symptoms occurred uniformly as a sickness developed, and what factors could therefore be viewed as coincidental and extraneous. Indian philosophers, on the other hand, were involved in the intractable question of distinguishing personal responsibility from influences due to nature and nurture, a matter we are still arguing about millennia later.

Another instructive area of comparison relates to the rejection of approaches which were thought to be dogmatic or arbitrary. In the Nikāyas three types of teacher are sometimes identified whom we might categorise as traditionalists, controversialists and empiricists respectively. The first relied on authority (usually the Vedas), the second on argument, the third (to which group the founder of Buddhism assigns himself) on experience. For the Treatises there were exponents of temple medicine, inveighed against in a text called 'The Sacred Disease' (i.e. epilepsy). Here the writer argues quite simply that there is no such thing as a sacred disease, no value to a supposed cure

7 Lloyd, p.30.

8 M III 63.

9 D II 55.

consisting 'merely of ritual purification and incantation'<sup>10</sup>, and that 'the brain is the seat of this disease'<sup>11</sup>.

The counterparts of the sectarian controversialists of India were very largely the Pre-Socratic philosophers. In the main these were theorists with no responsibility for actually treating patients, and the Hippocratic school sometimes evinces anger at the dogmatism of their *a priori* formulations. These included the numerological pre-occupations of the Pythagoreans and the popularisation of the four humours doctrine by Empedocles. Such approaches are condemned by one practitioner as narrowing down the causes of disease<sup>12</sup>. He is clearly much more aware of the limitations of his knowledge and commendably concerned not to make matters worse, saying 'either help or do not harm the patient'<sup>13</sup>. This emphasis on humanitarian considerations in the face of anything that looks like theorising for theorising's sake is quite in accord with the Nikāyas.

What emerges from these last remarks, of course, is that medicine is an applied science which requires a code of professional ethics. Such a model obviously served Gotama's wider agency well and effectively generates the first two elements of the Eightfold Path, i.e. 'Right View' (*sammā diṭṭhi*) and 'Right Intention' (*sammā saṅkappa*), corresponding to the physician's skills and integrity respectively. The following quotation from the Hippocratic Oath would certainly have delighted him.

'Whenever I go into a house I will go to help the sick and never with the intention of doing harm or injury. I will not abuse my position to indulge in sexual contacts with the bodies of women or of men, whether they be freemen or slaves. Whatever I see or hear, professionally or privately, which ought not to be divulged, I will keep secret and tell no one'<sup>14</sup>.

10 Lloyd, p.237.

11 *Ibid.*, p.241.

12 *Ibid.*, p.70.

13 *Ibid.*, p.94.

14 *Ibid.*, p.67.



## Buddhism and Science

A further use of medical metaphors in the Nikāyas is that they permit some ordering of priorities in addressing problems, but it is worth pointing out that this kind of judgement can occur on more than one level. Thus we may decide that certain questions are more **urgent** than others, but also we may have definite ideas about which are more **soluble** and amenable to investigation. The much-quoted parable of the arrow<sup>15</sup> seems to me to have implications on both levels if it is read with an awareness of other passages.

The text is well-known — a monk called Mālunkhyāputta effectively presents an ultimatum saying that he will quit the Sangha unless he gets (apparently) immediate answers to a whole series of questions. The response uses the parable to indicate the importance of dealing with problems in the right order, points out that these were not questions to which answers had been promised and claims that this is because 'the living of the good life could not be said to depend on (answers to them)'. Overall a very telling retort, but one can see an *ad hominem* element in the situation because of the monk's somewhat confrontational approach, and the unrealistic and immature manner in which he raised so many matters at once. In other words we should be careful of wrenching the parable out of context in a way which assumes that topics can be crudely pigeon-holed as relevant or irrelevant regardless of the circumstances or personality of the enquirer. In another situation<sup>16</sup>, for instance, Gotama quite happily offers a series of vivid metaphors when asked about the length of an aeon, though one might well argue that the living of the good life does not depend on that either.

On a different occasion<sup>17</sup> the same range of questions (i.e. on cosmological origins and final states) is put by a non-Buddhist ascetic and in this case the tactic adopted is simply to take no

15 M I 429.

16 S II 181ff.

17 M I 484ff.

position on any of them, so that the baffled enquirer is forced to address the *dukkha*-related issues central to the Nikāyas instead. One might ask how far this noncommittal response is also methodological insofar as such matters may have been viewed as inherently intractable. The Buddhist Dhamma was after all marketed as *ehi-passiko*, a 'come-and-see-thing'<sup>18</sup> and it is just this type of question which is least accessible to experience.

It is the writer's belief that what we are seeing here is an early stage in the demarcation of intellectual discipline, a demarcation driven both by a humanitarian sense of priorities and by epistemological necessity. But it was not open to Buddhism, as a generator of whole cultures and with a supposedly omniscient founder, to go down the road of scientific specialism. So the sidelining of (in particular) cosmological questions does not mean that they are completely ignored. On the contrary, we find a section of the Nikāyas headed 'Incalculable beginnings' and, in the Kevaddha Sutta, a semi-humorous story about a monk who, having made use of psychic powers to visit a heaven-world, proceeds to ask Brahmā about the final state of the four elements only for the latter to confess his ignorance. The effect is to stress the mystery and opaqueness of such matters and to warn against attempts to provide ready answers.

Another reason why the establishment of existential priorities cannot lead to specialism lies in the fact that various doctrines that are usually treated as central can no longer be easily ring-fenced. The rebirth theory, for instance, has to co-exist nowadays with biological evolution, so that a modern restatement would ultimately need to relate it convincingly to the finite history of life on Earth, to the common ancestry of different life forms, to population increase and to genetic permutations. This is a tall order but something that needs to be recognised. It will not do for Buddhist apologists to claim easy compatibility with the scientific worldview in any way which suggests that traditional dogmas need no reappraisal at all.

18 D III 5.



From the standpoint of a different culture and with a seemingly narrower focus the Hippocratic authors also had to face what I have described as demarcation problems of intellectual method. In 'Tradition in Medicine' we are told 'medicine differs from subjects like astronomy or geology. . . because there is no sure criterion (in the latter)'<sup>19</sup>. The writer appears to be claiming here that the physicians' approach permits growth of knowledge through experience in a way that the philosopher/cosmologists' does not, perhaps thereby making explicit a distinction implicit in Gotama's exchanges with monk and ascetic of the above sort. The doctors were also finding that the subject-matter of medicine could not be confined to the human body — a text called 'Airs, Waters, Places' recognises that environmental factors affect the incidence of disease.

Overall, the conclusions I derive from a comparison between the Nikāyas and the Treatises are that the beginnings of Buddhism and of empirical science in the West are roughly contemporary and contain some common features. The most important of these is a reaction against both supernatural explanations and purely deductive systems based on arbitrary assumptions in favour of the investigation of causality. In the West medicine occupied a key rôle in this movement because the need to examine the patient before making the diagnosis pushed it towards an *a posteriori* approach to knowledge in a very clear-cut way. The Nikāyas also display these tendencies, but their concern with existential problems of a broader nature, with régimes of personal discipline and with the advocacy of a value system meant that Buddhism retained a panoramic view of questions and problems.

#### Sidelights on Dr Harvey's Article

In the article referred to at the outset Peter Harvey provides a closely reasoned examination of the pragmatic theory of truth, which he defines as 'taking the truth of some utterance as

consisting in its being useful to some end'. He concludes that the theory is not valid as a representation of the philosophy of the Nikāyas nor (apparently) in itself, whilst recognising that primitive Buddhism is a pragmatic system in the looser sense. I wish to endorse all these views from the standpoint of my earlier comments.

I would seek to dispose of the pragmatic theory fairly rapidly by means of the following argument. Any system of belief that advocates a lifestyle incorporating spiritual practices, ethical precepts, etc., as beneficial can only do so on the assumption of some regularity of causal connection. Or, to put the matter differently, it must take human beings to be sufficiently alike for its teachings to have some generality of application. How far this is true is a matter for debate but also a purely factual question. Since all forms of Buddhism promote practices of the above nature they are reliant on such assumptions and cannot consistently argue for the pragmatic theory of truth. I agree with Dr Harvey that the Nikāyas do not seem to be at fault in this respect.

Still, one can easily understand why, after more than a century of demythologising, the pragmatic theory should appear attractive in a religious context. Traditional views of religions as straightforward descriptions of supernatural realities have become chronically eroded by the advance of knowledge, and comparative religion itself has considerably relativised such accounts in cultural terms. Thus there has been an increasing tendency to justify this kind of belief system as life-enhancing rather than as dogmatically correct. The trouble is that, whilst some may indeed regard the life-enhancing qualities, if genuine, as establishing the 'truth' of the beliefs (the pragmatic theory), others might well see the same outcome as indicating that illusions can be more sustaining than truths (Marx's 'opiate?'), particularly if apparently incompatible beliefs seem to be equally 'useful' or some tenaciously held doctrine is glaringly at odds with observation and experience.

It may be that the key to characterising primitive Buddhism in terms of pragmatism lies in avoiding both lines of thought, and one way to achieve this is to point to the idea of 'a gradual

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd, p.70.



training, a gradual performance, a gradual method<sup>20</sup>, something fundamental to the outlook of the Nikāyas. Gradualism differentiates these texts very sharply from Biblical and Qur'anic religion because it underscores so firmly that truth **cannot** be adequately 'revealed' through an initial conversion experience or by scriptural pronouncements. At the outset the initiate is *ex hypothesi* deluded, otherwise he can have no need of Dhamma, but since he is his beliefs at this stage are, up to a point, a matter of indifference. It is surely such indifference that renders Gotama pragmatic in those various situations where he seems to be saying 'If you believe X the Eightfold Path is to be recommended, but if you do **not** believe X the Eightfold Path is to be recommended'. Pragmatism in these terms is not an alternative to empiricism, but an extension of it designed to take account of legitimate doubts and differences.

My thesis that primitive Buddhism was both different from and cognate with the beginnings of natural science can be compared with views attributed by Harvey to F.J. Hoffman (p.121ff.). Hoffman apparently wishes to distinguish between 'experimental' and 'experiential', a valid contrast between disciplines in which experiment and experimenter are one and the same are a unique category outside both natural and social science. But one can still fairly represent the Eightfold Path as an experiment in living and regard its credibility as dependent on the repeatability of the experiment, provided one accepts that the human variables will complicate all evaluations.

To establish that verification/falsification<sup>21</sup> is not possible in

20 M III 1.

21 It may be useful to remind readers that Popper's classic writings on falsification were rooted in the recognition that the universality of a natural law cannot be demonstrated since a finite series of observations is never enough and an infinite series is clearly impossible. Thus the meat of a testable theory resides in the possibilities it excludes, and if any of these is subsequently established the theory must be revised or abandoned. See K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London 1959.

Buddhism, Hoffman offers the hypothetical case of two monks who have studied under the same teacher, one of them claiming memory of previous existences after five years and the other failing to achieve anything similar after twenty-five. Here I cannot agree, however, because his analysis is faulty — monk B is represented as complaining that the teacher does not accept his failure as evidence against the rebirth doctrine, but this is not the direction in which falsification lies. Monk B should instead be examining monk A's claims by investigating whether they match up with actual circumstances and peoples in ways which could only be known by paranormal means. If the answer to this is negative he may decide that A's claims have been falsified and that no evidence for rebirth has been produced.

If, on the other hand, he draws a favourable conclusion and further decides that only rebirth can adequately account for paranormal memory then there has been a measure of verification. Not until this point does his own lack of such 'memories' become significant. Apart from possible limitations of the teacher and some undiagnosed deficiency in his own approach (analogous to experimental error?), it is then open to him to consider that rebirth might be an occasional rather than a general occurrence<sup>22</sup>. The third conclusion would compel a radical revision of a traditional doctrine, but for a consistent empiricist that is beside the point.

More broadly, the *Vimamsaka Sutta*<sup>23</sup> seems to take the view that verification is both necessary and possible in the investigation of other people's behaviour. Here 'things knowable through the eye and through the ear' refers to judgements about their actions and words by way of testing claims made by or for them.

22 Traditional doctrine already excludes 'enlightened beings' from the rebirth process, and a modern restatement would need to be much more explicit about its relationship to the whole range of life forms. As pointed out here, one might also reject orthodox views entirely whilst accepting the possibility of rebirth as an exceptional occurrence.

23 M I 317ff.



Progression through time is also taken into account, indicating an attempt to assess how far an admired trait has emerged as a result of the training. All such verification is certainly 'soft' (to use Hoffman's term), but there is no doubt that this text regards claims as testable.

My final assessment is that, whilst it would be wrong to equate primitive Buddhism with any form of science, the parallels are far more extensive than could be found in any other system normally labelled 'religion'. In an age which is too inclined to put the two disciplines in completely separate compartments, I regard such a conclusion to be of the greatest interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

## JHĀNA AND SAMĀDHI

John D. Ireland

It is the purpose of this essay to explore some aspects of what is signified by the term *jhāna* and its place in the scheme of Buddhist practice as it is found in early Buddhism. Meaning by early Buddhism what is set out in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pāli Canon, in contrast to modern ideas regarding Buddhist 'meditation' and also the picture presented by fifth century CE commentators such as Buddhaghosa. This leads to an examination of the nature of the Eightfold Path and a number of misconceptions concerning it found in modern writings on the subject.

In the suttas it is the *sammāsamādhi* or right concentration of the Eightfold Path that is defined by the standard formula of the four *jhānas* and is the province of the *ariyasāvaka* or 'noble disciple', as are all factors of the Path. Here is the formula in Nāṇamoli's translation<sup>1</sup>:

'Here, quite secluded from sensual desires, secluded from unprofitable things, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and exploring, with happiness and pleasure born of seclusion.

'With the stilling of thinking and exploring he enters upon and abides in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without thinking and exploring, with happiness and pleasure born of concentration.

'With the fading as well of happiness he abides in onlooking equanimity and, mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third *jhāna*, on account of which the Noble Ones say, "He has a pleasant abiding who is an onlooker with equanimity and is mindful".

'With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither pain nor pleasure, and the purity of whose mindfulness is

1 The translations by Nāṇamoli here and below are taken from *A Treasury of the Buddha's Discourses from the Majjhima-nikāya*, edited and published by Phra Khantipalo, 3 vols, Bangkok n.d.



due to onlooking-equanimity'.

It is usually assumed that the practice of the *jhānas* is pre-Buddhist, but is there really any solid evidence that this was so?<sup>2</sup> There is the problem that the Buddha employed terms used by his contemporaries, but then redefined them, often giving quite different and distinct meanings to them. It could be suspected that with all the eight factors of the Path, the summary of the core of the Buddha's teaching for his disciples, the terms used are defined in a special and specific way. Thus right view is actually not a 'view' at all in the accepted sense of a speculative opinion or dogma, a 'point-of-view', but a direct 'seeing' of reality. Again, *sati* means memory, but *sammāsati*, or right mindfulness, is a calling to mind of the present moment, a direct awareness of the here and now. It is also the contention here that the definition of *sammāsamādhi* in terms of the four *jhānas* is again a definition of *samādhi* different to what must have been the usual understanding of the word. However, in later times the term *jhāna* became generally accepted and widely known, was adopted retrospectively even outside Buddhism for *samādhi*-linked meditative states and thus apparently lost its novelty and uniqueness.

It is said that the practices of the two teachers the Buddha visited before the Enlightenment, Ālāra Kālāma and Udaka Rāmaputta, led to the *samādhi*-states of the formless or *arūpa*-spheres, the state of nothingness and that of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (M 26). But it is conceivable that these states were attained by ways other than the four *jhānas*. These formless *samādhis* were probably akin to such states as became known in later times in Hinduism, and Vedānta in particular, as *nirvikalpa-samādhi* and possibly not the same as the formless meditations (*arūpajjhāna*) as understood in Buddhism, although given these

names for want of a better. That the experiences the Buddha had with these two former teachers had no relation to the *jhānas* as later taught by him can be deduced from subsequent events. For, after leaving these teachers because he was dissatisfied with what they taught, the Buddha-to-be is said to have practised various ascetic and yogic methods for controlling the mind, such as breath-control and abstaining from food, so that he came near to death. But then there occurs a turning point. He thinks of a different way, something new and untried before, the practice of the *jhānas*! If the formless states he attained under Ālāra and Udaka were connected with and reached via the *jhānas*, as understood in later times, then he would have recollected the practice of the latter from that period. Instead, the attainment of *jhāna* was something he identified with a boyhood experience, which is suggestive, if not conclusive, evidence that the *jhānas* had no connection with anything practised by Ālāra and Udaka. Here is the passage in question from the Mahāsaccaka Sutta (M 36) in Nānamoli's translation again:

'But by this gruelling penance I have attained no distinction higher than the human state worthy of a noble one's knowledge and vision. Might there be another way to enlightenment? I then thought: "While my Sakyan father was busy, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual desires, secluded from unprofitable things, I had direct knowledge of entering upon and abiding in the first *jhāna* which is accompanied by thinking and exploring, with happiness and pleasure born of seclusion. Might that be the way to enlightenment?" Then, following on that memory came the recognition, "This is the way to enlightenment". I thought, "Why am I afraid of that pleasure? It is a pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unprofitable things". I then thought, "I am not afraid of that pleasure. . . ."

Now, what is *jhāna*? What can be deduced, if anything, about the nature of the experience of *jhāna* from this picture of a youth sitting quietly beneath a tree watching a man at work in the fields? One might forget that later legendary elaboration of this incident as the pampered prince, seated in state, while his father the king was performing the ceremonial ploughing around the royal palace of Kapilavatthu with crowds of attendants and citizens to hand, which obscures rather than helps. However, just attend to what was possibly the actual situation as described by

2 Mrs Rhys Davids seems to be in broad agreement that the *jhānas* are uniquely Buddhist, cf. *Sakya or Buddhist Origins*, London 1931, New Delhi 1978, p.163f. See also J. Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, 2nd ed., Delhi 1993, p.22f.



the Buddha: a boy sitting resting, perhaps having a break from his own labours, whilst his father continues to work, both absorbed in what they are experiencing and doing. Described here, it is suggested, is a detached seeing, a rapt awareness and clarity, but without involvement. The word *jhāna* is derived from the verb *jhāyati*: to think upon, contemplate, and is linked to the ideas of clarity and relaxed concentration. Wrong concentration is compared to the intensity of a cat watching a mouse, but right concentration is always associated with detachment and the absence of defilements, the 'unprofitable things', especially the five hindrances or *nīvaraṇas*: sense-desires, ill-will, lethargy-and-drowsiness, agitation-and-worry and doubt or hesitation.

The first *jhāna* is always said to arise from seclusion or detachment from sense desires, a separation from and a non-involvement with the usual preoccupations of the mind, the multiplicity of objects presented to the senses. An important preparatory practice for inducing *jhāna* is control or restraint of the sense-faculties (*indriyasamvara*), so that there are no value-judgements of likes and dislikes imposed upon the particular features and details of sense-objects; they are not identified through memories of past judgements and prejudices that would cloud and distract from actual seeing of what is factually present. This is the function of mindfulness and it is this as the seventh factor of the Path, right mindfulness, that is the necessary precondition for the arising of *jhāna*. Although all the other seven factors of the Eightfold Path, beginning with right view, are the conditions for the arising of right concentration (see M 117), it is right mindfulness that immediately precedes it and from which it arises. That the essential foundation for the whole Path is right view is stressed in the Mahācattārīsaka Sutta (M 117) with its repeated refrain, 'right view comes first'. Right view being the initial vision of the goal, the penetration of the Four Ariyan Truths: of suffering, its origin and ending and the path to be followed. Also in this sutta is shown that the factors of the Path are in causal sequence to each other, right purpose proceeds from (*pahoti*) right view, right speech proceeds from right purpose, and so forth. Thus right concentration arises from right mindfulness and from right concentration comes right knowledge and then

right deliverance, the two additional factors possessed by the arahant.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), 'The Discourse on Establishing the Presence of Mindfulness', there are four areas of contemplation: the body, feelings, states of mind and the contents of mind, and a number of exercises relating to them. The object of the practice is to keep the mind attentive, alert and aware of the processes that are occurring in the present moment. The mind is kept continuously upon a single object, such as the breath going in and out — this is the main exercise of *ānāpānasati*. Whenever the mind wanders off it is brought firmly back again and again. The aim is continuity of mindfulness. Likewise, mindfulness is maintained in the four postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down and in the various essential activities that have to be done, so that there is an unbroken continuity of mindful awareness and clarity. This mindfulness is then extended from the physical through the more subtle areas of feelings and sensations to the perception of mental states and processes. By continual effort in the practice — this is the factor of right effort — the continuity of mindfulness is gradually established. This continuity is essentially what is meant by the term *samatha* (evenness, calm). Why effort is needed is that the continuity is constantly being broken up by the distracting influence of the various hindrances. It is when the hindrances are suspended that perception is transformed, then something 'seen' is seen with a vivid and heightened awareness and becomes the sign of concentration and the access to *jhāna*. As when the venerable Mallaka, whilst looking at a ploughed field, attained *jhāna*: the sight of the brown earth becoming for him the earth-*kaṣiṇa* (object of concentration; see Visuddhimagga, p.123).

With the need for effort relaxed in the absence of the hindrances arise the so-called *jhāna*-factors, the most significant being the sensations of happiness and ease (*pīti, sukha*) and the experience of the first *jhāna* itself. The habit of mindful investigation, probing what is recognised as a new experience, yields the other two factors which accompany the first *jhāna*, thinking and exploring (*vitakka-vicāra*). The fifth *jhāna*-factor, singleness of mind (*cittass'ekaggatā*) or concentration, is the continuity of



mindful awareness itself. Upon familiarity with this state, thinking and exploring become unnecessary and being gross factors tend towards distraction and the break-up of the *jhāna*-state. They are therefore dropped and the second *jhāna* supervenes. Then the happiness or excitement (*pīti*) still present in the second *jhāna* is seen as a mark of instability and with its fading the third *jhāna* is reached. Finally, by shifting the focus away from the sensation of bodily ease or pleasure (*sukha*) the fourth *jhāna* is attained, a state of perfect equanimity and mindful awareness free from imperfections.

There are two aspects of *jhāna* that indicate its uniqueness within Buddhism. The first is its pleasurable aspect<sup>3</sup>. Outside of the Buddha's teaching the pleasurable nature of it tended to be condemned and concentration was more ascetical, inward looking and withdrawn. In Buddhist *jhāna* there is an expansion of the mind; the distinction between inner and outer is lost and the mind 'becomes great' (*mahaggatā*, extended, expanded). This is because there is no concept of a soul or a self dwelling within that could act as an inner focal point. The other aspect is its 'ariyan' nature, which permeates too the whole of the Eightfold Path, beginning with right view. Thus the second *jhāna*, where thinking and exploring, the 'vocal' factors that constitute 'inner speech', are absent, is called by the Buddha the 'ariyan silence' (*ariyatunhībhāva*) and the third *jhāna* formula specifically refers to it as a 'pleasant abiding' for the ariyans. In fact, all four *jhānas* are conceived as 'pleasant abidings here and now' for them. In the Sallekha Sutta (M 8) the form and formless *jhānas* are called respectively 'pleasant abidings' and 'peaceful abidings'. In the Nivāpa Sutta (M 25) all these *jhānas* are defined as states where Māra the Evil One has no access, and the disciple who has attained *jhāna* goes unseen by the Evil One and has crossed beyond the entanglements of this world.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the ariyan Eightfold Path, culminating in *sammāsamādhi* defined as the four *jhānas*,

3 Cf. Bronkhorst, *op. cit.*, p.24.

is the exclusive province of the *ariyasāvaka*. It is beyond the knowledge and experience of the *puthujjana* or outsider, despite what is said in popular books on Buddhism and assumed in most scholarly works also. The entry to the Path is the acquisition of right view which is a direct vision of the Deathless (*amata*) or final goal of the cessation of suffering and the first step on the Path leading to that goal. From the suttas one gathers it was obtained usually only in the presence of the Buddha himself through a specific Dhamma-teaching from him<sup>4</sup>. The Buddha is said to be the 'giver or bestower of the Deathless' (*amatassa dātā*, cf. M 18) and it is having this experience that differentiates the *ariyasāvaka* from other beings. The definition of right view is knowledge of the Four Ariyan Truths and these too are of course exclusive to the *ariyasāvaka* and were never taught generally to all and sundry as many modern writers would have us believe. The usual translation of *ariya* as 'noble', as in 'Noble Truths', 'Noble Eightfold Path', etc., may be misleading if it is not indicated that it is nearly synonymous with 'supermundane' (*lokut-tara*). It refers to a person who has realised (experienced) the supermundane, the vision of the Deathless, such as the sotāpanna, etc., and those able to communicate it, the Buddhas and arahants.

It is in the Commentaries and Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga that there are to be found references to a mundane (*lokiya*) Eightfold Path. However, in the Sutta Piṭaka itself, there is little to suggest this was conceived to exist. There are many references in the suttas to a wrong (*micchā*) and right (*sammā*) path issuing from wrong view and right view respectively. There are also references to a mundane and supermundane right view. But, although it has been deduced from such references, M 117 for instance, that there is therefore an actual mundane path, this is not borne out upon careful examination. In this sutta (M 117) mundane right view and wrong view are defined as two opposing aspects, in the belief that merit accrues from giving (*dāna*), that good and bad deeds (*kamma*) produce their results in the future,

4 See P. Masfield, *Divine Revelation in Pāli Buddhism*, London 1986, p.37f.



etc., and its opposite:

'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed, no fruit of ripening of good and bad deeds, there is no this world nor another world. . . .

However, the supermundane right view is defined as something completely different again:

'Any understanding, understanding faculty, understanding power, the investigation/enlightenment-factor (*bojjhaṅga*), right view as a path-factor (*maggaṅga*) in one whose mind is *ariya* and taint-free (*anāsava*), who possesses and develops the path, — this is called the ariyan right view, unaffected by the taints, which is supermundane and a factor of the path.'

Thus it is only the supermundane factors that are actually designated as path-factors and belong solely to the *ariyasāvaka*. It is the first five of these factors, from right view to right livelihood, that have their mundane counterparts, but these are not designated as actually belonging to a path as such. If it is insisted that they do, after all, constitute a mundane path, this would only be a fivefold path leading to rebirth in heaven, for the last three factors are not included in this scheme in the Mahācattārīsaka Sutta. It is true that elsewhere the factor of mindfulness, for instance, does have its mundane counterpart and is an important practice in its own right. It is conceivable that the insight and understanding arising through the practice of mundane mindfulness, the fourfold *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, would be a way of producing the supermundane right view and thus bringing the supermundane path into being. There are references to mundane *jhānas* (e.g. A II, p.126ff), but these are not associated with a mundane path and lead only to birth among the Brahma gods. The difference between the *ariyasāvaka* and the outsider or *puthujjana* is clarified in these suttas. For, whereas the *ariyasāvaka*, on completing his term of life among the Brahma gods, realises Parinibbāna, that is to say, he is a never-returner or *anāgāmin*, the *puthujjana* falls from that state into another birth. Moreover, the implication is more sinister in that the *puthujjana* is said to be *duggata*: destined for hell, animal birth and the realm of hungry ghosts, because of his wrong view and non-comprehension of the Four Ariyan Truths. Wrong view here being *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, the view of individuality, the idea of a self

as being permanent and thought of as embodied in the aggregates (*khandhā*), a wrong view still possessed by one having the mundane right view of belief in meritorious deeds and so forth. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is the first of the ten fetters (*samyojana*) and is got rid of only on becoming an *ariyasāvaka* and is the reason the disciple is not liable to be born in the lower realms of the *duggati* ever again. In the Sutta Piṭaka generally the effective pathway to mundane concentration and hence rebirth in the Brahma-world is by way of the *brahmavihāras*, the 'divine abidings' of unbounded kindness, compassion, etc., and not by way of the *jhānas* and a mundane Eightfold Path.

There are also references in the suttas to wrong concentration, but its nature and contents are not detailed at length. The forceful suppression of the mind by an effort of will may be a reference to a kind of wrong concentration practised by various non-Buddhist ascetics and by Gotama before his Enlightenment. There is also a kind of false *jhāna* practice disparagingly mentioned in M, suttas 50, 108, etc.:

'... with drooping shoulders, faces down-cast, as if drugged, they meditate, they meditate absorbed, they meditate more absorbed, they meditate quite absorbed<sup>5</sup>.

In the Māratajjaniya Sutta (M 50) such a practice is compared to an owl in a tree or a cat on a refuse-heap tracking a mouse, or a jackal on a river-bank absorbed in watching a fish in the water. In the Gopakamoggallāna Sutta (M 108) it is the meditation practice of one obsessed and overcome by sensual pleasures and the other hindrances, they being the objects of his meditation. In right concentration these hindrances are, of course, absent. The implication is that one obsessed by sensual pleasures is not in possession of the supermundane right view, the vision of the Deathless state, which is beyond this world of the senses and that he is unaware even of the existence of this state. In the Danta-bhūmi Sutta (M 125) one obsessed by sensual pleasure is com-

5 I.B. Horner's translation, *Middle Length Sayings*, PTS 1954-9, Vol.I, p.398; Vol.III, p.64.



pared to a person at the foot of a mountain being obstructed from seeing what lies on the other side and even doubting whether there is any view at all to be seen from the top. He is hemmed in by the mountain as Prince Jayasena, hemmed in by being immersed in sensual pleasures, doubts the existence of the singleness of mind achieved in *samādhi*. It is right view that supplies the proper motivation or right purpose, the second factor of the Path, for overcoming obsession and thus enabling the acquisition of right concentration and the cultivation of the four *jhānas*.

There is considerable confusion concerning the nature and purpose of *samādhi* and *jhāna*, and also the Eightfold Path itself and why the factors of the Path are in the order they are in. Much of this confusion stems from not recognising the transcendental nature of the Path. That it is, in fact, the supermundane path<sup>6</sup>. By not appreciating this, it is something of a mystery why the Path actually begins with right view, defined as the penetration of the Four Ariyan Truths, which seemingly ought to come at the end rather than the beginning. This difficulty has sometimes been overcome by devaluing and redefining right view as a kind of preliminary intellectual appreciation of the Buddha's teaching necessary to make a start in practising the 'path'. Another way of overcoming this difficulty has been actually to re-arrange the factors according to the 'three trainings' (*sikkhā*) or 'aggregates' (*khandhā*) of morality, concentration and wisdom. Then, right view could be placed in the last, under the category of 'wisdom'<sup>7</sup>. However, this apparent solution to the problem is *no* solution, for this threefold division is not an order of practice for a beginner, first commencing with morality and so forth. Rather they are those things cultivated and possessed by one who is already an *ariyasāvaka* and thus already in possession of the supermundane right view.

6 See Masfield, *op. cit.*, p.54.

7 See Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* (BPS), under *magga*, the source for much of the confusion concerning the 'path'.

A further source of confusion is the commentarial Abhidhamma dictum referring to the Path as a *javana*-moment of consciousness, the 'path-moment', that is followed without interval by moments of fruition. On the face of it, to regard a single moment of consciousness as a 'path' is absurd. There is no way the various references in the Sutta Piṭaka to the Path, to a person on the Path (of stream-entry, etc.) could be regarded as referring to a single conscious moment. It is only when the Path has been brought to completion, the moment before experiencing fruition for the first time, that such a moment of consciousness could be so designated. It is suggested, therefore, that the Abhidhamma 'path-moment' is actually the moment of 'exit' from the path into fruition, and not its 'entrance' which is the acquisition of right view and when the Path is as yet incomplete. What should not be confused is the difference between the sutta and Abhidhamma approach, between the sequential and momentary view of events. The sutta approach is to describe the steps necessary to achieve an aim, whereas the Abhidhamma approach is retrospective, answering the question: 'What factors (*dhammā*) were present at that moment?' It is worth noting that the theory of thought-moments is not found in the suttas nor the canonical Abhidhamma, but was introduced by the commentators, probably Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*, and is derived from certain Hīnayāna schools then existing on the Indian mainland, such as the Sautrāntika. In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa has adopted a number of teachings from the latter school, despite their criticism in the (earlier) *Kathāvatthu* of Moggaliputtatissa!

Another difficulty is why the Path apparently ends in *samādhi*, rather than insight or wisdom (*vipassanā*, *paññā*), for instance. The argument goes that the practice of concentration or calm (*samatha*) ought to be associated with the practice of insight. However, the right concentration of the Eightfold Path should not be confused with such meditation practices as the development of calm and insight. The latter more properly belong with the cultivation of the mundane fourfold *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. The purpose of *sammāsamādhi* or *jhāna* as the culmination of the Path is that it provides the state of mind necessary for the ensuing experience of the fruition of the Path (*maggaphala*). In



several places (e.g. S I, p.233; DhP v.229, etc.) the *ariyasāvaka* is said to be endowed with wisdom (*paññā*, i.e. right view) and pure conduct (*sīla*), but no mention is made of *samādhi*. The suggestion is that he must put forth effort to achieve *samādhi*, thus completing the Path and enabling him to realise fruition (*phala*) which is its outcome. Beginning from the initial vision or right view, the entire Path is a sequence of steps that, as the Buddha says, 'plunges into the Deathless' (S V, p.58). Any insight gained was gained prior to entering the Path and was concluded upon the acquisition of right view or *paññā*.

It is the pure mindfulness and equanimity of the fourth *jhāna* that provides the basis for the four formless (*arūpa*)-*jhānas*, the various deliverances (*vimokkhā*), the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) and the threefold knowledge (*tevijjā*): knowledge of former births, seeing the arising and passing away of other beings and the knowledge of the ending of the flow of defilements (*āsava*) of the arahant. For the Buddha and his disciples the fourth *jhāna* especially is a state they could enter whenever they wished to enjoy the fruition of arahantship (*arahattaphala*) and is then called the imperturbable or unmoving (*āneñja*)-*samādhi*. It was also from the fourth *jhāna* that the Buddha, and other arahants too, attained Parinibbāna or final passing away when life has ended.

\* \* \* \* \*

## EKOTTARĀGAMA (XXIV)

Translated from the Chinese Version by  
Thích Huyền-Vi and Bhikkhu Pāsādika  
in collaboration with Sara Boin-Webb

Tenth Fascicle  
Part 19  
(Supplication)

7. <sup>1</sup>Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī, at Jetī's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park. Then the Exalted One said to the bhikkhus: There are these two modes of behaviour (*dharma*)<sup>2</sup> that cause a man to be born in a low and poor family.

<sup>1</sup> See T2, 595a9 ff.; Hayashi, p. 167 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Thematically, it could perhaps be maintained that this quite sinicised section has a parallel to be found in the EĀ fragments of the Gilgit MS; cf. Ōkubo (for bibliographical information see BSR 13, 1 (1996), p. 65, n. 25), p. 95, and C. Tripāthi, *Ekkottarāgama-Fragmente der Gilgit-Handschrift*, Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, Monographie 2; Reinbek 1995, pp. 109, 210 f. Tripāthi ed. § 32.8 (p. 210 f.): *dvau dharmau na mātṛjñātāyāi saṃvartete adharma-caryā viśama-caryā ca /...yathā na mātṛjñātāyāi... (evaṃ na pitṛjñātāyāi na śrāma) nyāya na brāhmaṇyāya na kule jyeṣṭha-pacāyitāyāi.../* Because of two modes of behaviour, according to the Gilgit text, remissness (*adharmacaryā*) and rudeness (*viśamacaryā*), one neither honours one's mother nor one's father and, moreover, such behaviour is not conducive to asceticism, to brāhmanhood and, as far as one's family is concerned in a future existence, to the 'culmination of what is pre-eminent' (*jyeṣṭha-pacāyitā*, lit. 'that which has been caused to mature in regard to what is most excellent').

Normally, the past passive participle of the causative of √*pac* is *pācita*. At Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar* 34.8 (p. 167), examples are given that correspond to *pācayita*. Even for the noun *pacāyitā* of the Gilgit MS Edgerton provides a corresponding example (albeit not as a feminine): *lālayita*, perhaps 'desire' (BHSD, p. 462). As for *pacāyitā* cf. G. Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, Including Bhikṣuṇī-Prakīrṇaka and a Summary of the Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka of the Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin, Patna 1970, § 192 (p. 215, l. 5): *pacitum vā pacāyitum*, 'faire cuire ou de donner à faire cuire' (see É. Nolot, *Règles de discipline des nonnes bouddhistes, Le Bhikṣuṇīvinaya de l' école Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin*, Traduction annotée, commentaire, collation du manuscrit, Paris 1991, p. 228).



Which are the two? Being without filial piety towards one's father and mother and without obedience towards one's honourable teachers; and also personally being unable to perform duties. These are, bhikṣus, the two modes of behaviour that cause a man to be born in a low and poor family. Furthermore, bhikṣus, there are two modes of behaviour,<sup>3</sup> [leading to one's] being born in an outstanding and powerful family. Which are the two? Honouring one's father and mother, one's brothers and relatives; being ready to show one's family as much generosity (*dāna*) as possible. These are, bhikṣus, the two modes of behaviour [leading to one's] being born in an outstanding and powerful family. Thus, O bhikṣus, one should actually train. After listening to the Buddha's words, the bhikṣus were pleased and respectfully applied themselves to practice.'

8. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī... Then a brahmin lady by the name of Sūśas<sup>4</sup> approached Venerable Mahā-Kauṣṭhila. On her arrival, she bowed down her head at [the venerable one's] feet and sat down at one side. Then Sūśas, that brahmin lady, said to Kauṣṭhila: Both Udraka Rāmaputra and Ārāḍa Kālāma died without their finally having been converted to the profundity of this Teaching [of the Buddha]. The Exalted One describes these two persons as having realised respectively the spheres of "nothingness" (*ākimcanyāyatana*) and of "neither - perception - nor - nonperception" (*naiva -saṃjñā- nāsaṃjñāyata-*

<sup>3</sup> See Tripāthī, *ibid.* : (...dvau dharmau mātṛjñātāyai saṃvartete dharma-caryā, sama-caryā ca / ...yathā mātṛjñā (tāyai evaṃ pitṛjñātāyai... ) kule jyeṣṭha-pacāyitāyai.../ Righteousness (*dharmacaryā*) and agreeable behaviour (*samacaryā*), as the Gilgit version says, are conducive to honouring one's mother and father and, as far as one's family is concerned in a future existence, to the 'culmination of what is pre-eminent'.

This EĀ section may serve as a good instance to demonstrate the textual difference between the Gilgit EĀ fragments, which most probably have to be related to the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition (cf. Tripāthī, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-35), and the Chinese EĀ version, which is mainly associated with the Mahāsāṃghika school (cf. BSR 15, 1 (1998), p. 65 f., n. 4).

<sup>4</sup> 須深 Xūshēn – tentatively 'Sūśas'; as for 深, cf. the transliteration of *śmaśāna*, Soothill, p. 356b.

na).<sup>5</sup> When the lifetime of both had come to an end, after their death, one of them was destined for kingship on the periphery [of the civilised world, and his rule] proved a great distress to countless human beings. The other person's lot was to be a rapacious winged fox that was trapped [in its existence] as a flying and running beast. When [these two kinds of] existence had come to an end, both of them went to the *avīci* hell.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless the Exalted One did not say when their share of agony (*duḥkhakāṇḍa*) would be used up. Why did he not do so? – The Exalted One kept silent, Venerable Kauṣṭhila replied to Lady Sūśas, because nobody asked such a question. So the Exalted One did not say anything as to when their amount of extreme suffering would be finished. – As for the Tathāgata, Lady Sūśas continued, he has entered [Pari]nirvāṇa so that it is no longer possible to ask [him] that [question]. Having to stay on in this world, [I am] in pursuit of an answer to this question. Now will Venerable Kauṣṭhila [please] talk with me about this matter? When will the amount of extreme suffering of those persons be over? – Then Venerable Kauṣṭhila uttered these verses:

The harvest of whatever is sown will not be the same, and  
The same holds true of sentient beings' course of existence.  
With words I [can] not do justice to one who realises  
Independently (*svayaṃbhū*) the [ultimate] awakening.  
To attest [ultimate] release by means of insight-knowledge  
Through contemplation [one should have] actually  
Realised (*sam-anu-smṛ*) the superknowledge of the  
Divine Eye (*divyacakṣurabhijñā*).<sup>7</sup> [In regard to someone

<sup>5</sup> According to Hayashi, p. 167, n. 17, and DPPN I, pp. 296, 382, the states of meditation mentioned should be reversed.

<sup>6</sup> According to DPPN, *loc. cit.*, and EncBuddh I, 3, p. 378, in the Pāli sources (cf. also CPD II, 202, 408 f.) nothing is found about the fate of Gautama's former teachers as mentioned here in EĀ. What is known about the two teachers from Pāli texts is also given at CPS 9.2-4, 6-8; MPS 28.6-21; SHT IV, p. 316 (37 d V 3); in the Mvu, Lalitavistara, Divy and in the 12th canto of the Buddhacarita (for references see BHSD, pp. 103, 132). However, the teachers' fate as pointed out in EĀ is not indicated in the Sanskrit texts either.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nyanatiloka, p. 3: 'With the Divine Eye... he sees beings vanishing and reappearing... how beings are reappearing according to their deeds...'



Who] achieves the end of suffering once and for all,  
My words fail to do him justice. –

Thereupon Lady Sūṣas uttered the following verses:  
It is the Blessed One (*sugata*) who has this  
Insight-knowledge and is genuinely without weakness and  
Blemish; [those who] have heroic effort (*abhyutsāha*) as  
Their support (*viṣkambha*), look forward to practising  
In accordance with the Great Vehicle.<sup>8</sup>

Now once more Venerable Kauṣṭhila uttered verses as follows:

Such a disposition (*adhyāśaya*) is extremely rare (*sudurlabha*)<sup>9</sup>, enabling [one] to realise the wonderful essence of the Teaching.<sup>10</sup> With words it is difficult to do justice to it –  
To this extraordinary subject-matter (*vastu*). –

Venerable Kauṣṭhila then dilated on the essence of the Teaching for the sake of Lady Sūṣas which made her happy. In good time the lady rose from her seat, bowed down her head at [the venerable

<sup>8</sup> As regards EĀ and its association with the Mahāyāna, see BSR 11, 2 (1994), p. 157 f., n. 2. Here we certainly have an 'express and laudatory allusion' to the Mahāyāna; cf. É. Lamotte's article, with reference to the original title and place of publication, in BSR 12, 1 (1995), p. 29. Cf. also M. Hahn, 'Das Saptamaithunasamyuktasūtra, ein Sūtra des Ekottarikāgama', in *Beiträge zur Indienforschung, Veröffentlichungen des Museums für Indische Kunst Berlin*, Vol. 4, 1977, p. 210, concerning 'zahlreiche mahāyānistische Zusätze' in EĀ. On 'des éléments nettement mahāyānistes qui furent insérés assez tard dans le texte ancien de ce recueil' and 'une étape intermédiaire entre le bouddhisme antique... et le Mahāyāna proprement dit' pertaining to EĀ, cf. also A. Bareau, 'La fin de la vie du Buddha selon l'Ekottara-Āgama' in H. Falk (ed.), *Hinduismus und Buddhismus, Festschrift für Ulrich Schneider*, Freiburg 1987, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. BSR 11, 1 (1994), p. 50, n. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Soothill, p. 273: 法要, 'the essentials of the Truth'; cf. also Seishi Karashima, *A Glossary of Dharmarakṣa's Translation of the Lotus Sūtra*, Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica I, Tokyo 1998, p. 128: *fǎ yào*, 'the essence of the Dharma'.

one's] feet and went away. After listening to Venerable Kauṣṭhila's words, Lady Sūṣas was pleased and respectfully applied herself to practice.<sup>7</sup>

9. <sup>11</sup> Thus have I heard. At one time the Venerable Mahā-Kātyāyana, accompanied by a great many bhikṣus, altogether five hundred, visited Varāṇā (lit. 'the Vana country') on the bank of Deep Pool.<sup>12</sup> At that time Venerable Kātyāyana was renowned for [his perfectly practising] the four [kinds of right] effort.<sup>13</sup> An elderly, greatly respected gentleman, the brahmin Jīānchá,<sup>14</sup> heard that Venerable Kātyāyana had reached the bank of the said pool, being the leader of five hundred bhikṣus and being a venerable elder fully endowed with virtue (*guṇa*). [Thinking to himself,] Now I should go and interview this person, this brahmin of highest standing, [himself also] being a leader of five hundred disciples, approached Venerable Kātyāyana. After exchanging courtesies with [him] and having taken his seat at one side, the brahmin said to Venerable Kātyāyana:

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A I, p. 67 f. (II.4.7).

<sup>12</sup> The opening of the Pāli recension runs: *Ekaṃ samayaṃ āyasmā Mahā-kaccāno Madhurāyaṃ viharati Gundāvane*. Even though more often than not EĀ proper names are to be considered all too vague transliterations of the original names, here 婆那 *pōnā* (= *vana*) and 深池水側 certainly do not represent Madhurā and the Gundāvana (contrary to what Hayashi, p. 168, n. 21, suggests). The opening of the preceding Pāli discourse nonetheless (A I, p. 65 (II.4.6)) seems to be connected with the present EĀ locality: '... Kaccāna the Great was staying at Varāṇā on the bank of Muddy Pool' (F.L. Woodward, *Gradual Sayings* I, p. 61 (PTS 1932)).

<sup>13</sup> As for 四遠, 'the four [kinds of] keeping away from' – corresponding to *prahāṇa* – cf. Foguang, p. 4885c f. under 善律儀 *samvara*. At Mahāvīyut. 957-961, the *catvāri prahāṇāni* are enumerated, the Chinese translation of which actually answers to the description of the four *pradhānas*. Cf. Nyanatiloka, p. 112 f.: 'The Four Right Efforts' (avoiding, overcoming, developing, maintaining). See BHSD, pp. 380, 389: *pradhāna* = *prahāṇa* = Pāli *padhāna*.

<sup>14</sup> I.e. 姦茶 which might perhaps represent 'Kanja' (cf. Hackmann, pp. 98, 27); could this have been an unsuccessful attempt at transliterating 'Kaṇḍarāyana', the brahmin's name in the Pāli parallel of EĀ?



Kātyāyana's style of behaviour neither conforms to the normal social conventions (*dharma*) nor to discipline (*vinaya*). A 'young' bhikṣu is impolite to personalities like me, being high-minded brahmins. – O brahmin, replied Kātyāyana, you should know that the Tathāgata, the Fully and Completely Enlightened One, has spoken of two kinds of standing. Which are the two? The standing of old age (*vrddhabhūmi*) and that of youth (*bālabhūmi*).<sup>15</sup> – What is this standing of old age, asked the brahmin, and what is that of youth? – Now, seniormost<sup>16</sup> brahmin, answered Kātyāyana, someone who is eighty or ninety years old, who is still in the grip of carnal desire (*maithunarāga*) and does not refrain from misconduct is of the standing of youth, although he is in fact to be called an elderly man. – And what does it mean, the brahmin continued, to be young and yet to be of the standing of old age? – O brahmin, Kātyāyana said, even though a bhikṣu be just twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years old, he is of the standing of old age [in spite of] his youth if he is not given to carnal desire and if he refrains from misconduct. – I wonder whether within this large crowd, the brahmin remarked, there be just a single bhikṣu who does not indulge in carnal desire and does refrain from misconduct. – Kātyāyana assured him that in the large crowd there was not a single bhikṣu who was either given to lust (*rāga*) or to misconduct.

Immediately thereafter the brahmin rose from his seat, bowed down before all the bhikṣus, and in doing so, said: Now you are young, and yet you are of the standing of old age! I myself am already old but am of the standing of youth! – Then the brahmin again turned towards Kātyāyana at whose feet he bowed down his head and announced: Today I go for refuge (*śaraṇam gam*) to Kātyāyana and to the order of bhikṣus so long as my life will last (*yāvaj*

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the Pāli *daharabhūmi*, 'the standing... of youth' (Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 63). EĀ lit. 'standing of strength'. In all likelihood when the EĀ translation was being prepared, *bala* (strength) was confused with *bāla* (young in years).

<sup>16</sup> 正使, lit. 'senior envoy, chief delegate'.

*jīvam*).<sup>17</sup> – Kātyāyana told him not to go for refuge to him; he should instead go [for refuge] to the same person as he himself has done. The brahmin wanted to know from Venerable Kātyāyana to whom he had gone for refuge. Thereupon Venerable Kātyāyana prostrated himself in the direction of that place where the Tathāgata had entered Parinirvāṇa, [saying: Following the example of] the son of the Śākya clan who went forth into homelessness in search of truth, I have gone for refuge to him for good; and this is the person who is my master. – The brahmin inquired: Where does the Śramaṇa Gautama stay? I would like to see him. – The Tathāgata has already entered [Pari]nirvāṇa, replied Kātyāyana. – If the Tathāgata still remained in the world, the brahmin declared, I would certainly walk one hundred thousand *yojanas* in order to seek his advice. Though the Tathāgata has already entered [Pari]nirvāṇa, now I definitely go for refuge to the Buddha, to his Teaching and his multitude [of worthy disciples] and make obeisance to them so long as my life will last. – After listening to Venerable Kātyāyana's words, the brahmin of highest standing was pleased and respectfully applied himself to practice.'

10. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī, at Jetṭ's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍada's (T2, 596a) Park. Then the Exalted One said to the bhikṣus: There are two persons whose appearance in the world is extremely rare.<sup>18</sup> Which are the two? Exceedingly rare is the appearance in the world of a person that is able to set forth the Teaching, and equally rare is [the appearance] of someone who is able to listen to the Teaching, to remember it and put it respectfully into practice. These are, bhikṣus, the two persons whose appearance in the world is extremely rare. On this account, bhikṣus, you should train to be expounders of the Teaching and also to be [true] listeners [taking heed] of the Teaching. Thus, O bhikṣus,

<sup>17</sup> 盡形壽不殺 rendering *yāvaj jīvam* seems peculiar to EĀ; cf. Mahāvvyut. 8703.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. above n. 9. This sūtra has no parallel in Pāli but for this one sentence (A I, p. 87 (II.11.10)): *dve 'me bhikkhave puggalā dullabhā lokasmim*.



you should train. – After listening to the Buddha's words, the bhikkhus were pleased and respectfully applied themselves to practice.'

#### Additional Abbreviations

- MPS = E. Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Vols. 1-3, Berlin 1950-1.  
Mvu(B) = *Mahāvastu-Avadāna*, Vol. 1, ed. S. Bagchi, Darbhanga 1970.  
Mvu(RB) = *Mahāvastu-Avadāna*, ed. R. Basak, 3 vols., Calcutta 1963-8.

### Are There Two Levels of Truth and Reality?

A Review article by

Karel Werner

The title and contents of a recent learned German publication on Tsoṇ-kha-pa and his works raise an important point about Buddhism and its nature which deserves to be reflected on each time it surfaces in literature and which will no doubt be a bone of contention for the indefinite future<sup>1</sup>.

The problem is better known under the name of the doctrine of 'two levels of truth' rather than 'two realities', although the term 'two levels of reality' does occur as well and, in fact, it is in that sense an accepted part of Theravāda teachings, although it was never explicitly formulated in the early Buddhist sources. The Theravāda version of this doctrine was expressed in a radical formulation by Nyanatiloka Thera. According to him, there is 'Truth in the Highest Sense' (*paramatthasacca*) which contrasts with mere 'Conventional Truth' (*vohāra-sacca* or *sammuti-sacca*). The Buddha, it is maintained, used conventional language (*vohāra-vacana*) whenever 'mention is made of a person, a self, or rebirth of a being etc.' and at other times 'he used the philosophical mode of expression corresponding to reality in the highest sense'. Then follow truly ontological statements: 'In the ultimate sense, existence is a mere process of continually changing physical and psychical phenomena, within which, or beyond which, no real Ego-entity or personality can ever be found. . . The only actual realities are those physical and psychical phenomena, though only of momentary duration, arising and passing away every moment'. Nyanatiloka admits, however, that the terms *paramattha*-, *vohāra* and *sammuti-sacca* belong as such to the commentarial literature, but their significance is clearly shown in the old Sutta texts, e.g.

---

1 *Die Lehre von den zwei Wirklichkeiten in Tsoṇ kha pas Madhyamaka-Werken* [The Doctrine of the Two Realities], by Helmut Tauscher (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 36) Vienna 1995. x, 478 pp. Pb. \$16.96.



D 9: '*loka-samaññā, loka-vohāra*'; further (D 33) '*sammuti-ñāṇa*' etc.<sup>2</sup>

So the full doctrine of two levels of truth and of reality was by this admission developed only in the commentarial literature. It certainly was never explicitly stated in the discourses of the Buddha in the Sutta Piṭaka. But is it present there implicitly? While we can disregard Nyanatiloka's references to the expressions *loka-samaññā, loka-vohāra*, we have to ask: Is the doctrine really implied in the notion of *sammuti-ñāṇa*? This expression occurs in the Saṅgīti Sutta in a passage spoken by Sāriputta. It is used there as a designation for what we can call

2 Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 2nd rev. ed., Colombo 1956, under *Paramattha-sacca*, *Sammuti-sacca* and *Vohāra-sacca*. In the posthumous 3rd edition of 1972, enlarged and revised by Nyanaponika Thera, the sentence 'The only actual realities are those physical and psychical phenomena, though only of momentary duration arising and passing away every moment' has been omitted by him. Instead, he has added a more extensive explanation which has an interesting twist. He says at the outset: 'It is one of the main characteristics of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, in distinction from most of the Sutta Piṭaka, that it does not employ conventional language, but deals with ultimates, or realities in the highest sense (*paramattha-dhammā*). But also in the Sutta Piṭaka, there are many expositions in terms of ultimate language (*paramattha-desanā*), namely wherever these texts deal with the Groups (*khandha*), Elements (*dhātu*) or Sense-Bases (*āyatana*), and their components. . . . There is a subtle shift of logical position in Nyanaponika's formulations which leaves the issue less than clear: Abhidhamma, according to him, deals with *ultimates, or realities* in the highest sense, but the Sutta Piṭaka only uses *terms of ultimate language*. As I understand the meaning of Nyanaponika's statement, it says that Abhidhamma presents an *ontological* doctrine where the Sutta Piṭaka presents as experiential analysis in *impersonal* terms. (The expression *paramattha-desanā* is, of course, post-canonical; 'ultimate language' is an imprecise rendering of it; for *desanā* 'exposition' is preferable.) Nyanaponika's own position with respect to the ontological implication of his statements for the Sutta Piṭaka is not clear as was that of Nyanatiloka, but what is clear is that he does advocate the validity of the notion of two truths for the Sutta Piṭaka by implication.

the logical category of 'general knowledge' which is distinguished from 'precise knowledge', based on exact definitions (*pariccheda*), and from various other kinds of knowledge which are classified according to their objects:

There are four knowledges: knowledge of the doctrine, knowledge of conclusions, knowledge of exact definitions, general knowledge<sup>3</sup>.

Four further knowledges mentioned thereafter concern the Four Noble Truths<sup>4</sup>. No distinction is made between ordinary and higher kinds of knowledge, although the passage clearly differentiates between stages and sorts of knowledge according to the object of knowledge. The term 'truth' (*sacca*) is not mentioned, the tacit assumption obviously being that all these knowledges are, in their context, true. False knowledge is no knowledge at all and is always classified as ignorance (*avidyā*) or delusion (*moha*). What is, however, really implied in the quoted passage is a 'hierarchy' of knowledges in accordance with the nature of the object and the range and depth required for knowing it. The full understanding or realisation of the Four Noble Truths implies, of course, the final knowledge of being liberated, here and now. No word is ever said about levels of reality.

The first actual step towards the twofold distinction of knowledge and to asserting two levels of truth was, perhaps, taken in the Kathāvatthu<sup>5</sup>. The expression *sammuti-ñāṇa* has there a somewhat vague meaning of 'ordinary knowledge', rather than the logically clearer meaning of 'general knowledge'. The controversy is whether *sammuti-ñāṇa* has as its object truth (*sacca*) and nothing but the truth, namely 'real truth'. It is admitted in the discussion that, for example, one who has attained the *jhānas* through a particular meditational method does have knowledge — knowledge of the method and the jhānic state — and that this

3 *cattāri ñāṇāni: dhamme ñāṇam, anvaye ñāṇam, paricchede ñāṇam, sammuti-ñāṇam* — D III, 33; PTS ed., III, p.226.

4 *aparāṇi pi cattāri ñāṇāni: dukkhe ñāṇam, samudaye ñāṇam, nirodhe ñāṇam, magge ñāṇam* — *ibid.*, p.227.

5 KV V, 6. PTS ed., pp.310-II; *Points of Controversy*, p.180.



knowledge comes under the category of *sammuti-nāṇa*, ordinary knowledge. So he has 'knowledge of [real] truth', even though this knowledge is 'ordinary' and the 'truth' which he knows about the method and jhānic state is an 'ordinary' truth (*sammuti-sacca*). The text obviously fails to differentiate between truths according to a given object of knowledge and displays a tendency to absolutise the concept of truth. The objection raised by the Theravāda exponent against this usage of the term 'truth' is this:

Does one, through the same ordinary knowledge, understand suffering, forsake its cause, experience cessation, develop the path?<sup>6</sup>

The answer is, of course, no. The conclusion the text draws from this is that ordinary knowledge (*sammuti-nāṇa*) does not have as its object *sacca*, i.e. the [real] truth or the Truth as such, but only 'ordinary' truth (*sammuti-sacca*). The implication the text takes for granted is that understanding and realising the Four Noble Truths involves knowledge which is not ordinary, because they are not ordinary truths. But the text still stops short of endowing such a *nāṇa*, or [true] knowledge, and *sacca*, the [real] truth, with any classifying attribute, such as *paramattha*, no doubt because the usual designation of the Four Truths as 'noble' (*ariya*) renders a further classification with additional attributes unnecessary or superfluous.

The term *paramattha* does occur in Kv, although in the adverbial form, in connection with the controversy about the nature of the person (*puggala*). The question is: Does 'person' as such obtain (can a person as such be apprehended) *paramatthena*, i.e. 'in the highest sense'?<sup>7</sup> The Theravāda position, of course, is that it does not (that it cannot be apprehended). This in itself does not yet constitute any clear doctrine about two truths or two levels of reality, but it is a step in that direction. The commentary then can and does put on it its new radical interpretation. Thus the full doctrine of the existence of ultimate truth and ultimate reality or

6 *tena nāṇena dukkham pariñāṇāti, samudayam pajahati, nirodham saccikaroti, maggam bhāvevīti* — ibid.

7 *puggalo upalabhati saccikatthaparamatthenāti* — Kv I, lff; PTS ed., p.2ff.

realities as distinct from ordinary truth and ordinary reality eventually gets spelled out.

Prior to that the two terms (*paramattha* and *sammuti*) were employed together in the Milindapañha as classifiers of propositions. The king Milinda was puzzled by seemingly contradictory statements of the Buddha — when he on one occasion spoke about 'his' followers, but elsewhere disclaimed being the leader of the order of monks on whom the order would be dependent. Nāgasena explained that it was not the Buddha who saw himself as the leader, but the [unenlightened] monks who viewed him as such.

These, O great king, are ordinary [views]: 'This is I', 'This is mine', not the ultimate [knowledge].<sup>8</sup>

An example of an ultimate proposition is not given here either, but it is another clear step towards developing the Theravāda doctrine of two levels of truth and reality elaborated in the commentaries.

The doctrine of two truths (and two realities) was being shaped in India also in Sarvāstivāda and other circles. It was inevitable that it would enter the Mahāyāna arena. But there it received a different twist. Mahāyāna replaced the early Buddhist concept of 'no-self' or 'insubstantiality' (*anatta/anātman*) with the notion of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and applied it generally. This means that it also denied actual reality to all the physical and psychological phenomena (*dhammas/dharmas*), because it found them to be as empty of substance (or 'own nature', *svabhāva*) as were the concepts of 'I' or 'mine' or 'person' or 'being' (*puggala, satta*) in Theravāda understanding. The only truth, and that is the ultimate truth, is, for Mahāyāna, the truth of emptiness and it is primarily a liberating truth. This was first expressed in the paradoxical, if not puzzling, statements of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, but the doctrine was eventually given its full formulation by Nāgārjuna:

The exposition of the teachings of the Awakened Ones is based on two

8 *sammuti mahārāja esā: ahanti, mamāti, na paramattho eso* — Miln IV, 2,30; PTS ed., pp.159–60.



truths, on worldly ordinary truth and on truth in the ultimate sense<sup>9</sup>.

However, since ordinary truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) shares emptiness with truth in the ultimate sense (*satyaṃ paramārthataḥ*), the former is indispensable, because it is a means to understanding the latter and hence to liberation:

Without using the ordinary [language] the ultimate cannot be expounded; without arriving at the ultimate [meaning] Nirvāṇa cannot be attained<sup>10</sup>.

There is, however, no suggestion in the whole of Nāgārjuna's work that the two levels of truth correspond to or represent two levels of reality. Rather they always point to two levels of understanding, knowledge or experience. Neither the elements of experience on the *saṃvṛtisatya* level nor the understanding of truth in the ultimate sense (*satyaṃ paramārthataḥ*) have in his texts any ontological connotation. In other words, the actuality of experience on different truth levels does not imply assertion of the actual existence of elements of reality on different levels. In fact, the reality or non-reality of elements (*dharmas*) or their conglomerates or, for that matter, of Nirvāṇa, is never discussed, only their emptiness. Nāgārjuna was not, in that sense, a speculative thinker with metaphysical leanings. The obvious and sole purpose of his expositions and of the Madhyamaka teachings as a whole is soteriological. That means that they steer a middle way between idealistic and realistic philosophical temptations to interpret reality in speculative conceptual terms and are always intended to serve as means for the realisation of the true purpose of the Buddhist teachings, which is the attainment of liberation. In that sense they remain truer to the original spirit of the Buddha's discourses than some Abhidhammic and later commentarial speculations of the Theravāda school about 'actual realities' (*dharmas*) momentarily coming into and out of existence, to say nothing of the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of the

permanent existence of 'ultimate' *dharmas* throughout the three periods of time (past, present and future). Thus Nāgārjuna and early Madhyamaka represent a return to the original tenor of the Buddha's teaching:

Just as . . . the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so too . . . this doctrine and discipline has only one flavour, the flavour of liberation<sup>11</sup>.

This may or may not be the case with all subsequent Mādhyamikas. Ontological tendencies certainly crept in at various stages and the problem was, necessarily, transferred from India to Tibet as is demonstrated by the present publication. However, it has not stopped there and also haunts modern interpretations. The author of the book himself expresses the view that it has not yet been resolved in academic circles whether the expression *satya dvaya* (Tib. *bden pa gñis*) designates 'two truths' or 'two realities'. He is further of the opinion that in principle the two meanings (truth and reality) are implied in both the Sanskrit and Tibetan terms, but that one or the other meaning must attain preference. The two *satyas* must be primarily either ontological or epistemological categories. Current usage would suggest ascribing reality value to things and truth value to propositions and cognition (knowledges). The author, however, maintains that Tsoṅ-kha-pa interprets the expression *satya dvaya* as 'two realities' and he therefore translates it that way and applies it as a technical term even in connection with texts and authors who take the expression *satya dvaya* to mean 'two truths'. This, to my mind, is ill-advised and clouds the whole issue, but it appears that to resolve or at least elucidate it comprehensively was not the author's prime concern. His is a basic research work tracing historical connections between schools and lineages and developments within Tsoṅ-kha-pa's works, and semantic analysis does not appear to be his strong point.

The author's chosen understanding of the term *satya dvaya* then even influences his interpretation of Nāgārjuna whose

9 *dve satye samupāsṛitya buddhānāṃ dharmadeśanā / lokasaṃvṛtisatyaṃ ca satyaṃ paramārthataḥ* // Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (MMK) XXIV, 8.

10 *vyavahāramanāśṛitya paramārtho na deśyate / paramārthamanāgamyā nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate* // — MMK XXIV, 10.

11 *seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo ekaraso loṇaraso evam eva kho ayaṃ dhamma-vinayo ekaraso vimuttiraso* — A XIX, 16; PTS ed., IV, p.203.



position is marked by his obvious soteriological concern, as I argued above. The author insists, however, that Nāgārjuna's writings do also have an ontological basis, yet he never presents any arguments to support this view.

The work itself tackles its main task in three large sections. The Introduction includes a brief life-sketch of Tsoṅ-kha-pa (1357-1419) which comprises, of course, some legendary features. Tsoṅ-kha-pa received his initiation as an *upāsaka* at the age of three and became a novice (*śramaṇera*) at seven. Having received education in the scriptures, including the Prajñāpāramitā texts, Tantrism and Madhyamaka, at several monastic centres of learning as well as from mystic communications with Atiśa (the Indian missionary in Tibet in the eleventh century who tightened discipline in the Tibetan Order and founded the bKa'gdams-pa tradition), he was ordained monk in 1380. He then became active as a teacher, while continuing his studies. In 1392 he initiated a reform of the bKa'gdams-pa school during a meditational and ascetic retreat with eight pupils, which is regarded as the founding of the dGe-lugs-pa tradition. In 1393 he had a vision of Mañjuśrī/Mañjughoṣa and in 1397 he obtained certainty about his understanding of Nāgārjuna and 'absolute reality' (or truth?) during a dream.

According to the author's interpretation Tsoṅ-kha-pa's basic conception of *satya dvaya* is this: Both 'realities', the conventional and the ultimate, 'are neither existent in the ultimate sense, nor non-existent in the conventional sense'. In other words, they exist only on the ordinary level. But this very formulation of the issue is, I think, a demonstration of the difficulties caused by translating *satya* as 'reality'. If we stick to 'two truths', then their existence on the ordinary level can be understood in the sense of conceptual constructs. Their non-existence in the absolute sense then logically follows, because both levels share the absolute truth of voidness to which the categories of existence and non-existence, derived only from ordinary experience, do not apply. From this angle one can make good sense of Nāgārjuna's *dictum* about using ordinary [language] to expound ultimate truth and thereby arrive at the ultimate [meaning] as a precondition of the attainment of Nirvāṇa.

However, the arguments between the schools from which Tsoṅ-kha-pa's conception of *satya dvaya* and the author's understanding of it emerged are much more intricate and they do go on and on. The second section is full of them, while it deals with the so-called 'negation object' (*Negationsobjekt*, Tib. *dgag bya*). This expression has no Sanskrit equivalent (and there is no easy way of conveying it in English). Its origin is in the notion of insubstantiality or voidness which seems to become hypostatised. One can understand the world in the absolute sense only through its voidness, i.e. through the absence of the falsely imagined existence of a substance in things. Only by understanding the non-reality of the falsely imagined substance of things can its denial (negation) lead to the understanding of voidness.

This is supposed to be Tsoṅ-kha-pa's innovation and enrichment of Madhyamaka (although the concept of 'negation object' was already known in Tibetan literature before him). He tried to legitimise it, in the absence of a suitable precedent in authoritative Madhyamaka sources, by quoting, out of context, an unrelated verse from the Bodhicaryāvatāra (IX,140). The author virtually admits that Tsoṅ-kha-pa did this twisting knowingly. Nevertheless, the concept was important for him and so it is discussed in the third section, particularly in connection with *saṃvṛtisatya*, which is otherwise dedicated mainly to the nature and mutual relation of the 'two realities'. The 'absolute reality' is dealt with, among other ways, from the angle of 'different sub-sorts (*Abarten*) of voidness' (there seem to be very many of them), but the closing subsection is dedicated to the notion of *paramārthasatya* as Nirvāṇa. Here at last we learn that Nirvāṇa is not a synonym of *śūnyatā*, let alone *paramārtha*. It can be designated as *paramārtha* only in the sense of being 'the highest goal'. Even the designation Nirvāṇa is merely conventional, it too belongs to *saṃvṛtisatya*. It is just worldly convention to call it *paramārthasatya*. Surprise, surprise!

If I understand the final outcome of this *tour de force* of a book, then Tsoṅ-kha-pa virtually annulled the teaching of the 'two realities', which I would applaud. But I may be wrong. A more competent scholar will have to decide the matter. However, the book is not very readable and many of its typically German



extended sentences and composite nouns could hardly be rendered in English. It can be fully assessed only by someone with a thorough knowledge of the Tibetan language and of the relevant texts (not merely of the author's quotations, extensive though they are). Those who cannot even think of reading it may feel consoled by the author's reiteration of his summary of Tson-kha-pa's teaching of the 'two realities' in just one sentence, the last one in his book: 'Both realities exist [only] conventionally and relatively, but not in the ultimate sense'.

\* \* \* \* \*

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*. W. Pruitt. Pali Text Society, Oxford 1998 (but 1997 on the spine). vii, 414 pp. £17.00. ISBN 0 86013 352 5.

It has been the practice of the Pali Text Society (= PTS) to keep all its publications in print, as long as the Society's finances make this feasible and the publications are thought to reach the high standards which the Society sets itself.

It is greatly to be regretted that some early publications — made at a time when reliable manuscripts were sometimes hard to come by, Pāli scholarship in the West was in its infancy and dictionaries and grammars were inadequate, if they existed at all, — are no longer suitable for reprinting and have consequently been allowed to remain out of print.

Three closely related texts come into this category: the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathās*) upon the *Vimānavatthu* (ed. E. Hardy, 1901), the *Petavatthu* (ed. E. Hardy, 1894) and the *Therīgāthā* (ed. E. Müller, 1893), all composed by Dhammapāla, and published by the PTS as *Paramatthadīpanī* Parts III, IV and VI.

It has been the Society's hope that sooner or later someone would offer new editions of one or more of these texts for publication and thus help fill the gaps in the Society's List of Issues. It has been a long wait, but at last it has become possible to publish a new edition of the *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*. It has been made by Dr William Pruitt, whose *Etude linguistique de nissaya birmans* was recently reviewed favourably in this journal (Vol.14, 1, 1997, pp.206-9).

Dr Pruitt set out with the intention of making a translation of the *aṭṭhakathā*, but was advised that it would first be necessary to make a new edition of the text to serve as a foundation for this. Since his prime aim was not to make a critical edition, he did not consult manuscripts, but took the Burmese *Chattāsaṅgāyana* edition as a basis of his work, comparing the Sinhalese and PTS editions and adopting readings from those sources, as well as various editions of the *Apadāna* verses which are quoted in his text, where they seemed to be superior.



Variant readings are given in the footnotes, and verses and passages which are quoted from other texts or have parallels elsewhere are also identified. To facilitate dictionary references to Müller's edition, the page numbers of the latter are inserted in square brackets. A computer-generated Word Index is added, and also an Index of Proper names, an Index of Texts Cited and an Index of Quotations from other texts. Computer-generated indexes always present problems because of the difficulties involved in instructing a computer how to handle the (apparent) inconsistencies of the alphabetical position of anusvāra (ṃ). Dr Pruitt's Word Index has suffered as a result of this difficulty, so that readers looking for *samyata*, for example, will find it after *sammūḥa*.

The result of all the hard work which has gone into this publication is not the critical edition which the PTS would have preferred to publish, but readers will find that it is a useful edition, far superior to that of 1893 which it supersedes. We now await Dr Pruitt's translation of the Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā.

K. R. Norman

Index to the Dīgha-nikāya. Compiled by M. Yamazaki, Y. Ousaka, K.R. Norman and M. Cone. Pali Text Society, Oxford 1997. vii, 357 pp. £19.75. ISBN 0 86013 355 9.

The Pali Text Society's edition of the Dīgha-nikāya was published in three volumes, of which Volume I was edited by T.W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter in 1890; Volume II by the same scholars in 1903; and Volume III by J. Estlin Carpenter in 1911. All three volumes have been reprinted a number of times since then. They have selective indexes, but the text lacks a complete index, and this volume is being published to fill that gap.

This computer-generated index has been made by the same pair of Japanese scholars who published an *Index to the Vinaya-piṭaka* in 1996, and before that with a third colleague a set of *Indexes to the Dhammapada* in 1995 (see BSR 14, 2, 1997, pp.188-90). In making the index, for which the present reviewer and Dr Margaret Cone acted as technical advisors, a number of misprints in the original edition have been tacitly corrected.

The sorting program used to make the index does not distinguish between lower and upper case letters, so that the

initial letter of each word is in lower case. Consequently there is no difference in the index between common and proper names. The program regards a hyphen as marking the end of a word, so the components of compounds which have been separated by hyphens are listed as individual words, e.g. *Soṇ-Uttaram* (= *Soṇa* + *Uttaram*) is listed as *soṇ* and *uttaram*. The editors of the Dīgha-nikāya were not always consistent in their use of hyphens. It happens, for example, that *mahā-rājā* is the usual form in Vol.I and would therefore have been listed as two words, while *mahārājā* is the usual form in Vol.II. This would be listed as one word. The program also regards words which are broken at the end of lines, and therefore hyphenated, as two words. As far as possible this latter defect has been removed, but the alternative treatment of compounds has been left, for the most part, as to remedy it would have involved a great deal of manual emendation which it was not feasible to undertake in a work of this size. For the same reason, words printed in crasis without hyphens have been included in exactly the same form as they are printed.

Although some readers may doubt the value of nearly four pages of references to *ca*, and three pages of *ti* references, this would seem to be a small price to pay for having at last a complete index to the Dīgha-nikāya.

K. R. Norman

The Śālistamba Sūtra, Sanskrit Reconstruction, English Translation, Critical Notes (including Pāli parallels, Chinese version and ancient Tibetan fragments). N Ross Reat. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1993. xiii, 74 pp. Rs 150. ISBN 81-208-1135-6.

The *Śālistamba Sūtra* will require no introduction to BSR readers: after all, Vol.8, 1-2 (1991) contains a translation by John M. Cooper informed, *inter alia*, by consultation of a draft of the study under review, while 15, 1 (1998) includes a lengthy and valuable notice by Chr. Lindtner of the more recent work by J. Schoening on the commentarial tradition of this text; Lindtner bases his own observations on the text of 'Dr Reat's convenient work'. The title itself of Dr Reat's convenient work speaks for itself, and shows why it should have become the edition of choice of scholars since its appearance; its virtues need no further



elaboration.

The following remarks, then, are simply meant as a reminder that for many Buddhist works even a good editor, unless possessed of a remarkable breadth of education in half a dozen Asian languages (not only Sanskrit, Pāli and Tibetan, but Classical and Modern Chinese, and Japanese also), is bound to leave one or two loose ends to be tidied up. In other words, for all its excellence, the volume under review is still not the ideal edition of this ancient and influential text, in that there are still problems to be solved with the earliest witness to the text, which happens to be in Chinese. These are dutifully pointed out by Reat on p.14, before he passes on to incorporating a less problematic version of the Chinese text, anonymously translated during the fourth century, into his own study: it would appear that for this he has had to rely on the reading skills in Chinese of an associate, and so while he should be applauded for doing what was necessary to make a serviceable edition, it is understandable that he has not ventured too far into the Chinese evidence.

The earliest Chinese text we have is not the earliest translation said to have been made, since in an important preface to it written by Daoan in the late fourth century (preserved in the *Chusanzang jiji*, Taishō 55, 6, p.45b) it is designated a second translation, made to replace an inadequate pioneering version produced during the Han dynasty, i.e. before 220 CE, and probably during the late second century. Daoan also tells us that the text was already intensively studied by Indian scholars, increasing somewhat the likelihood that Lindtner is right in claiming an apparently early commentary for Nāgārjuna. As to the possibility that our earliest translation is a retranslation, this would seem consistent with what we know of the predilections of the translator.

For this individual, Reat has been dependent on the research of Zürcher, but the fact that he misquotes him on p.1 (even if An Shigao did have descendants, as A. Forte suggests, he was never literally a 'grandson' of his predecessor) shows that he has not read what *The Buddhist Conquest of China* has to say about Zhi Qian with particular attention. The problem is, as that admirable study makes abundantly clear, that Zhi Qian's translations and re-

translations involved substantial reworking of the text to make his productions conform as far as possible to Chinese literary norms. Thus if, as Reat shows on p.14, Zhi Qian's translation manifests a structure very different from that of any later version, we cannot be sure to what extent this structure results from the translator's intervention. The special problems involved in assessing Zhi Qian's translations in fact cannot be solved until a thorough study is undertaken of all his surviving works in relation to other materials — since in some cases we do have earlier translations with which to compare — and such a study is unlikely to appear soon, given that even earlier translators like An Shigao have still not been assessed definitively by Western scholarship. But once the task of assessing Zhi Qian's methods has been accomplished, then we will know how to make use of the materials one century older than any other witness to this text.

In time too, the other materials preserved in Chinese may yield additional information of value, even though they are much later. Contrary to what is normally stated, there are in fact five translations of our text in Chinese, not only those from the third and fourth centuries dealt with by Reat but also further eighth and tenth century translations, plus one anonymous work, which the Chinese Buddhist reformer Taixu revealed in one of his works as a Dunhuang manuscript translated into Chinese by the great ninth century bilingual exegete Chos grub/Facheng. This last work, perhaps, was derived not directly from Sanskrit, but from the first Tibetan translation, which is older. Dunhuang is also the source of a commentary by Facheng on our text composed in Chinese and, given his access to Indian commentarial tradition, it may be that we will learn something from a close study of this source too, which as far as I am aware has not been undertaken.

All this is not to say that Reat's work is inadequate: indeed, it is likely to stand as a convenient reference for some time to come. But the integration of East Asian scholarship, ancient and modern, into Western Buddhist studies is still not complete, and until it is work of this sort must surely remain (albeit in a purely technical sense in this case) 'provisional'.

T.H. Barrett



*The Bodhisattvapitaka. Its Doctrine, Practices and their Position in Mahāyāna Literature.* Ulrich Pagel. (Buddhica Britannica, Series continua V) The Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring 1995. xvi, 478 pp. £40.00. ISBN 09515424 43.

This is a fine study (and partial translation) of a most important canonical Mahāyāna text (or group of texts): the *Bodhisattvapitaka*, part of the *Ratnakūṭa*, often quoted (or referred to) by numerous later authorities. It is the first systematic study of the Bdp.

As the author points out, the text exerted considerable influence on the formation of the bodhisattva ideal in general, and on the doctrine of the (six) perfections (*pāramitā*) in particular. The Bdp is the longest and most important bodhisattva sūtra of the forty-nine texts found in the *Ratnakūṭa*. It is also one of the earliest. Another important sūtra from this collection, the *Akṣayamatīnīrdeśa* (now edited and translated by Jens Braarvig, Oslo 1993), often borrows entire passages from the Bdp.

Even a brief review of its contents will give the reader an idea of the importance of this indispensable book:

Chapter One, the Bodhisattvapitaka in Mahāyāna literature, discusses the term *bodhisattvapitaka*, the text and its relationship to the *Akṣayamatīnīrdeśa*, its scholastic affiliation, the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, its history and its translations and sources.

Chapter Two provides an analysis of the Bdp, its structural and literary traits, the bodhisattva path, its organisation.

Chapter Three is on the bodhisattva ideal of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection and deals with the various categories of bodhisattva texts, the vow, the practice and the doctrine of the bodhisattva, the householder and the mendicant bodhisattva. It also describes the literary and structural characteristics.

Chapter Four is on the bodhisattva doctrines and practices in the Bdp within the context of other scriptural traditions, and discusses the notions of *bodhicittotpāda*, the six perfections, above all, from various angles, *prajñāpāramitā*, and finally, the ideal of *upāyakaśālyā*.

Chapter Five is a translation of Chapter Eleven of the Bdp. It deals with the paths of equipment, of preparation, of vision, of meditative realisation and with the *prajñāpāramitā*, and its

benefits.

Two appendixes compare the forms of learning and the *samādhi* lists found in the Bdp and in the *Akṣayamatī*. The final appendix is a bibliographical guide to the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection. A comprehensive bibliography (pp.437-58) and an index (pp.459-78) are provided.

A few additional remarks to this excellent work: the author has used the slightly different Tibetan and Chinese translations available for, as he says, 'no Indic version is known to have survived' (p.1). Fortunately, the author here seems to be mistaken. At least as far as I am informed (from what I would consider a reliable source), there is a Sanskrit manuscript from Tibet, now in China. Further details cannot yet be provided.

Among the many later references to the Bdp the one in Nāgārjuna's *\*Bodhisambhāra[ka]* 163 (see my *Nagarjuniana*, p.247) seems to have escaped the author's attention. It is on *dharmapūjā*. The occurrence of the term Bdp in one of Nāgārjuna's authentic works has important implications for the discussion about the quotation in the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, an issue I do not think Ulrich Pagel (pp.21-5) has treated exhaustively. It is misleading to claim that the *Sūtrasamuccaya* contains quotations that 'are clearly post-Nāgārjunian', and then refer to my paper on the *Laṅkāvatāra* (p.22, n.65) in support (if I understand correctly) of that (in my opinion erroneous) view.

Another sūtra that Nāgārjuna explicitly mentions in the *\*Bodhisambhāra[ka]* 95 is the *Daśadharmaka*, also incorporated in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection (see Pagel, p.425). Surely, Nāgārjuna was, among other things, an expositor of (what was, at least later on, known as) the *Mahāratnakūṭa*.

The matter is, of course, important in the sense it has to do with the relative chronology between the early sūtras and śāstras of the Mahāyāna. As known, Nāgārjuna, in many works, refers to numerous Mahāyāna sūtras and we must try to identify his sources. He extensively used the *Kāśyapaparivarta* (see, most recently, my paper, 'What is the *dharmas caturbhadra*?', to appear in the *Indo-Iranian Journal*). With his excellent knowledge of the Bdp, Ulrich Pagel should check all the available authentic works of Nāgārjuna and his students (Āryadeva,



Mātrceta) for possible influence from the Bdp.

As I understand it, the author intends to publish a critical edition of the Tibetan version of the Bdp, which will be most welcome. One can only encourage him not to procrastinate over this task. In the study of Mahāyāna probably the most urgent desideratum at present is to make available even 'preliminarily' critical editions of primary sources, i.e. the sūtras. There is no reason to postpone this work until the Sanskrit manuscript in China eventually becomes available to scholars.

Chr. Lindtner

Wisdom of the Buddha. The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra: Essential Questions and Direct Answers for Realizing Enlightenment. Tr. John Powers. (Tibetan Translation Series 16) Dharma Publishing, Berkeley, CA 1995. xxii, 397 pp, 14 illus. and line drawings. \$25.00. ISBN 0-89800-246-X.

The *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is one of the most important Mahāyāna sūtras and, although it was translated into French some time ago by Étienne Lamotte, this is its first translation into English. It is a sūtra of the Mahāyāna subtradition sufficiently doctrinally self-aware to have evolved a conception of its place at the apex of a dialectic of new beginnings and subsequent misunderstandings, Buddhist doctrinal history as a dialectic swinging from positive to negative and then to that reconciliation which shows how it must be, finally distinguishing without confusion what is from what is not. Thus it is the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* which gives us the three famous 'turnings of the Dharma-wheel', from the turning at the deer-park in Sarnath which taught the Four Noble Truths and so on — implicitly and sometimes explicitly suggesting evidence — through to the teaching of universal emptiness associated with the Perfection of Wisdom literature — an equally momentous turning, which subsequently was (it is alleged) misunderstood and became the cause of nihilistic confusion — culminating in the synthesis of the *Saṃdhinirmocana* itself, a synthesis which explains in terms of the 'three aspects' or three kinds of 'own-being' (*trīsvabhāva*) what does exist and how it exists, and distinguishes it from what does not exist and what it means to say that it does not exist.

Both the first and second turnings of the Dharma-wheel are indeed the teachings of the Buddha, are indeed wonderful, but both had been misunderstood, taken as the final word when really only provisional beneficial strategies by the Buddha. The final dialectical synthesis and clarification by the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* itself, however, is definitive. It tells how it is, and cannot be taken as a basis for confusion or misunderstanding.

The *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is thus a philosophical sūtra, with a great deal on what does and does not exist. It sees itself as a clarification of what has gone before, and a corrective to its misunderstanding. It also explains its ontology in terms of some sort of mentalism (*citta-* or *viññaptimātra*), although it is not totally clear how this relates to other forms of *cittamātra* found in the Buddhist tradition, and provides an important source for the theory of the 'substratum consciousness' (*ālayaviññāna*). Because of its self-consciousness about the previous development of Buddhist thought and its own position within it, this sūtra is also a major source for the distinction between texts which are 'definitive' (*nītārtha*) and those which are 'interpretable' (*neyārtha*), those which tell how it really is and those which eventually transcend themselves towards a higher truth. Tsong kha pa thus used the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* in his *Drang nges legs bshad snying po* as a major resource for delineating the Yogācāra/Cittamātra way of making this distinction, set against what he portrays as a characteristically Mādhyamika way based on the *Akṣayamatīrdeśa Sūtra*.

Perhaps because the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* provides us with such a clearly stated and important critique of what it sees as a nihilistic interpretation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, combined with its hermeneutics and its mental ontology, it has perhaps been rather neglected in the past as a resource for much other important Mahāyāna doctrinal material. Thus we have here significant discussions of the ten *bhūmis*, and a schema of the *pāramitās* which — presumably drawing on the favourite use of a base of ten in the *Daśabhūmika*/Avatamsaka tradition — while still giving primacy to the number six adopts an expansion of the *pāramitās* to ten to match the *bhūmis*. There is also material on *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, and a fascinating discussion on the



bodies of the Buddha (do *nirmāṇakāyas* have minds?) and pure and impure Buddha-fields.

John Powers has worked on this sūtra for many years, initially for his doctoral study. The Sanskrit is no longer extant, and he bases his translation on the Tibetan text although he has also looked at the Chinese versions. Powers has previously published a translation of *Two Commentaries on the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* by Asaṅga and Jñānagarbha (Lewiston 1992). For the present translation he has used a number of commentaries in the bsTan 'gyur, notably the great commentary translated into Tibetan from the Chinese of the Korean scholar Wonch'uk. He has also included extensive explanatory translations from these commentaries in his notes. The book has been produced in a series aimed at a general rather than a specialist academic readership, perhaps particularly with the needs of the North American Dharma market in mind. It is very nicely printed, with the English translation on pages facing a very clear print of the sDe dge Tibetan text which manages the difficult task of getting the Tibetan to face more or less line by line the English translation. There are a number of illustrations, including a lovely colour frontispiece of a thangka of Śākaymuni Buddha. John Powers' devotion to the sūtra, his interest in its contents and his extensive reading in the commentarial literature are impressive, and for making the work available to a wider readership he deserves very considerable gratitude.

However, there are some additional comments which should also be made. Perhaps because the translation was prepared for a North American Dharma readership, there is only a very short introduction which does little more than repeat the contents of the text. The translation appears to be based on the received text, which is not an *edition* of the text, and there is no textcritical apparatus or comments. The back cover of the book speaks of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* as 'an incisive guide to the compassionate path of the Bodhisattva for more than two millennia'. While falling short of adopting the traditional Mahāyāna perspective that the Mahāyāna sūtras were actually taught during the lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha himself, this suggests that the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* dates from (presumably) before the

Common Era. As we have seen, there can be no doubt that the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* does not spring from the earliest stratum of the Mahāyāna. The earliest translations of Mahāyāna sūtras into Chinese date from the second century CE — the same century in which Nāgārjuna is usually thought by most scholars to have lived — but they contain nothing of this level of development and sophistication. The earliest Mahāyāna sūtra literature *perhaps* can be pushed back to the first century or so BCE, but it would be highly unlikely that this included the *Saṃdhinirmocana*. The sūtra itself refers at a number of points to a *bodhisattvapīṭaka*, here almost certainly not the sūtra of that title (see the study by Ulrich Pagel, *The Bodhisattvapīṭaka*, Tring 1995 — see previous review) but rather a collection of bodhisattva (i.e. Mahāyāna) texts. Even the *idea* of an organised collection of this sort does not suggest the earliest phase of Mahāyāna thought. And the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, attributed to Nāgārjuna, contains quotations from a number of sūtras often considered later than the text's putative author, but there is no mention of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* — which is what we would expect. Powers has given no discussion of the antecedents and origins of this sūtra. Does *he* hold that the text can be placed as early as before the Common Era, or is this something that has been added by Dharma Publishing?

There is anyway at least one point where Powers appears to be at variance with the authorities at Dharma Publishing. Tarthang Tulku, in his Preface, in common with a tradition of Tibetan scholarship found *inter alia* among the rNying ma pa, describes the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* as one of 'definitive meaning' (i.e. *nītārtha*, p.xiii). On p.xxii, however, Powers himself, in common with the dGe lugs tradition (he thanks a number of dGe lugs lamas for their advice and help) describes the sūtra as 'taught by the Buddha as a skillful means' (i.e. *neyārtha*). Both are of course speaking from within a particular Tibetan hermeneutical standpoint, but (unfortunately for the nonspecialist or Dharma reader) it is not the same standpoint, and these differences have not been discussed in the Introduction or Notes.

This translation has been the subject of a long critical review by Tom Tillemans in the *Journal of the International Association*



of *Buddhist Studies* (20:1, 1997, pp.153-64: 'On a Recent Translation of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*'). Tillemans holds that part of the problem is that Powers failed to use sufficiently Lamotte's previous translation, and also a translation of several portions from the sūtra by Erich Frauwallner in his *Die Philosophie der Buddhismus*, as well as Hsüan-tsang's Chinese translation. Tillemans shows, I think quite convincingly, a number of occasions where careful use of these additional resources should have helped Powers avoid some unhappy translations. It would be no defence of Powers' translation to say that it is not a work intended for research scholars. If a general or Dharma readership deserves a translation, then it deserves a proper translation, done to the best of our abilities.

But it would be unfortunate if Tillemans' careful review detracted from all the value of this translation. There is masses of interesting material in this sūtra, and much of it can be gleaned from Powers' translation (note, for example, the sūtra's reference to those who hold variant views from its own (or from Buddhism): They 'will be reborn as sheep or oxen', and will 'cycle in saṃsāra for a very long time' (p.21)). Tillemans concentrates on a thorough discussion of a fairly small number of examples, and even he stresses 'that much of the text of the SNS [*Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*] is more or less correctly rendered into readable English. . .' (p.164). There are indeed a number of terms and expressions which Powers uses for which I would prefer an alternative translation. Thus 'imputational' for *parikalpita* fails to represent the Sanskrit properly (= imputed). *Samskṛta* as 'compounded' is problematic, since the Abhidharma *saṃskṛta-dharmas* are noncompounded simples which enter into compounds. They are not, however, independent of causes and conditions. Thus *saṃskṛta* is better translated by 'conditioned'. What is the justification for rendering *kḥams* (= *dhātu*) as 'constituents' on p.55? Powers gives no discussion at all of his choice in rendering key technical terms. Tillemans is right to urge caution in those who are unable to check to their own satisfaction the Tibetan and/or Chinese texts, but he also points out the importance of making this sūtra available for those who have access only to the English version. Translation is always tentative,

and scholarship is a process of taking risks and awaiting (perhaps even collaborating in) improvement. For taking that risk, and inviting our collaboration, John Powers deserves our thanks.

Paul Williams

The Land of Bliss. The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light. Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras. Introductions and English Translations by Luis O. Gómez. (Studies in the Buddhist Traditions) University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, and Higashi Honganji Shinshū Ōtani-ha, Kyoto, 1996. xvi, 357 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8248-1694-3/1760-5.

The Shorter and Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras are well known as the basic scriptures of the monastic 'Pure Land' School (Jōdō Shū) of Japanese Buddhism, founded by Hōnen (1133-1212), and its lay offshoot, the 'True Pure Land' (Jōdō Shinshū) established by Shinran (1173-1212). The latter exists today in two varieties and has probably the largest following of all Buddhist sects in Japan, with a substantial number of branches abroad.

In the shorter version of the sūtra the Buddha Śākyamuni describes the wonderful setting of the paradise of bliss presided over by the Buddha Amitābha and the sounds that fill it and constantly remind its inhabitants of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha so that each one of them feels the presence of the Three Jewels in his whole body. Both versions urge the 'sons and daughters of good families' to set their minds on being reborn in this paradise which is, of course, what the followers of the Pure Land faith of all varieties hope to achieve. In the longer version, the Buddha Śākyamuni also gives an account of how it all came to be. Eons ago, a monk by the name of Dharmakāra took a series of vows under the then Buddha Lokeśvararāja and, when he eventually fulfilled them, he became the Buddha Amitābha and now resides in his Buddha-field, the Western Paradise. His radiant light penetrates many worlds and delights many beings. Merely on hearing the name of this Tathāgata Amitābha, beings have a chance to conceive the thought of trust in him, and this alone will secure their progress towards full enlightenment. The Chinese versions



are more accommodating than the Sanskrit ones, promising rebirth in the Pure Land even to 'persons of inferior faith', who are unable to acquire any merits but who feel joy when hearing the name of the Dharma and even just for one single thought-moment bring to mind the Buddha Amitābha, aspiring simultaneously to be reborn in his land.

The author's plan was to produce the translation and annotation of both versions of this sūtra in such a way as to enable both scholars and interested readers to penetrate into the cultural world of ideas which are so very remote from our modern way of thinking. To fulfil this aim he has chosen an unusual approach, translating both the long and short versions of the sūtra twice, once from their Sanskrit originals (or the preserved Sanskrit versions, since there just *might* have been earlier versions in some India vernacular) and then also from their Chinese translations. However, texts destined for wider readership require readability, while scholarly publications must bow to principles of accuracy, present critical analyses and offer exhaustive references, cross references and comparisons of various readings. So he decided to publish the result of his scholarly efforts in two further volumes still to follow, which will contain the original texts and their 'technical' translations, with methodological introductions and detailed annotation. Thus the involved reader will have at his disposal four translations of each version of the sūtra, altogether eight English, besides two Sanskrit and two Chinese texts of the Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra, a real feast.

The present volume contains, first, a short Preface in which the author describes and justifies his procedure. In Part 1 each version of the two sūtras, translated from Sanskrit, gets its own Introduction, explaining their titles and message, describing their setting, introducing the participating personalities and dealing with some of the obvious as well as implied teachings behind the story, followed by a discussion of some of the concepts occurring in the sūtras, such as faith and hope, the nature of the bodhi-sattva's path and the paradox of his vow. In the 'Epilogue and Transition' at the end of Part 1, the author also speculates on the possible relationship between 'popular' Buddhism and the 'doctrinal systems of scholastics' and touches on the interesting

and little explored problem of the feasibility of presenting a systematic picture of the Buddha-field theory. The problem of the transference of merit and the somewhat uneasy coexistence of the 'polarities' of devotional surrender and dedicated effort in Mahāyāna practice is also given attention. The Introduction to Part 2, with translations of Kumārajīva's version of the shorter and Saṅghavarman's version of the longer sūtra from their Chinese editions, puts them in the historical context and looks at some of the issues mentioned above from the Far Eastern perspective. Although the scholarly annotated volumes are yet to appear, the present one has notes too, 32 pages of them, but all of them are clearly written and most useful even for general readers. The Appendices contain two (simplified) diagrams of our single world system based on Indian Hindu and Buddhist traditions and one of the layout of Sukhāvati as conceived by the author on the basis of the texts; tables of rebirth destinations and Buddha-fields and of textual comparisons; itemised suggestions for further reading with brief hints about the recommended literature; and a Glossary of terms and names with correctly spelled equivalents in Sanskrit and Chinese characters. The Index is extensive and thorough.

About the usefulness of this publication for all interested parties there can be no doubt. It is very readable throughout and, in fact, a delight to read. The readability of the translations of the texts means, of course, that they are rather free, as the author himself readily admits. So scholars will look forward to the two future 'technical' volumes. My only criticism concerns the inconsistent transliteration of Sanskrit terms in the whole book. They are usually given without diacritical marks in regular script (the author calls this way 'the Anglicized spelling established by convention') and the correct transliteration with diacritical marks is given in brackets in *italics* when the term occurs for the first time. This, in my experience, only increases confusion for the lay reader and perhaps minor irritation for the specialist, while for the new breed of 'religionist', i.e. the specialist in religious studies with no or only rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit who sometimes consults Sanskrit dictionaries, it proves on occasions a major irritation (in the present publication he can consult the Glossary, but why complicate the matter so much?). The incon-



sistency of this method also leads to vacillations even in the author's usage, one of them being the unsightly hybrid spelling of the name 'Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras' in the subtitle of the book. The reason for this mixed procedure is not explained. I for one cannot think of any and would always favour consistent usage of diacritical marks. It is the supposed 'anglicized spelling established by convention' (which is by no means unified in different publications) which could appear in brackets on the first occurrence of the term, but a short note on pronunciation is a better and long established way.

Karel Werner

The Mongolian Tanjur Version of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. Edited and Transcribed, with a Word-Index and a Photo-Reproduction of the Original Text (1748). Igor de Rachewiltz. (Asiatische Forschungen 129) Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1996. xx, 231 and 52 pp. Cloth, DM 198.00/ÖS 1544.00/SFR 198.00. ISBN 3-447-03594-3.

The canonical edition of the Mongolian version of this celebrated Buddhist poem was first published in Beijing in 1748. Using three old Mongolian manuscripts, three printed Tibetan versions and three commentaries, Bilig-ün Dalai introduced various changes in what is basically the translation by the famous Chos kyi 'od zer (Čosgi Odsir, fl. 1305-21). Bilig-ün Dalai's main contribution is to be seen in his bringing the old 'preclassical' language into harmony with the 'classical' language characteristic of the huge corpus of Buddhist texts translated from Tibetan into Mongolian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A transcription of the canonical version was first published by the late Professor L. Ligeti in the Mongol Nyelvemléktár series in 1966. Since this transcription is now rather difficult to procure, and also contains many misprints, etc., a new and more critical edition is obviously called for. For his edition Ligeti in quite a few cases tacitly adopted variant readings from the Kowalewski manuscript first published, very beautifully, by B. Ja. Vladimircov in the Bibliotheca Buddhica xxviii, in 1929 (reprinted by Biblio Verlag, Osnabrück 1970).

With its emendations and critical apparatus, the new transcription by Igor de Rachewiltz is a clear improvement on

Ligeti's. Of particular value for the student is the exhaustive word-index (pp.127-216). A separate appendix lists all doubtful forms and textual emendations (pp.219-28). Variant readings of the 1312 Daidu (Beijing) edition are also listed (pp.229-31). Finally a photocopy of the 1748 blockprint edition is given. It is probably as clear as technically possible, but still often a strain on the eyes.

The book, then, is a useful source not just for students of classical Mongolian but also for historians taking an interest in the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia.

Still, it is clear that without a knowledge not just of the Tibetan version but — in particular — of the Sanskrit original, there are numerous passages that it is virtually impossible to make sense of in the Mongolian edition. It is perfectly understandable why learned Mongolian monks would normally have to learn Tibetan.

The ideal, then, will be one day to have a trilingual edition of our text — the Mongolian along with the Tibetan and Sanskrit. (From a textual viewpoint none of the three versions — as opposed to the often obscure Chinese version — poses any really serious problems as far as I am aware, cf. my Danish translation in *To buddhistiske læredigte*, Copenhagen 1981 — also the first modern version to consult all the available commentaries.)

As I have pointed out elsewhere, the proper name of our author is Śāntadeva (rather than Śāntideva). This form of the author's name is also supported by the Mongolian version (p.124: *santa-dibas.* . .). Moreover, and this is more important, the full title of his poem is *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (rather than the abbreviated form *Bodhicaryāvatāra*). This form is also supported by the Mongolian: *bodhi-satuva-nar-un yabudal.* . . pp.1 and 124, translating Tibetan *byan chub sems pa'i spyod pa.* . . Obviously, our poem is not an introduction to the life of *bodhi*, but to the career of a *bodhisattva*. The source of the abbreviated title is probably the author himself, in 10.1, *q.v.*

The most recent modern translation is that of Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, published as *Śāntideva: the Bodhicaryāvatāra*, by Oxford University Press (World Classics) in 1995. Unaware of the Sanskrit usage of *madhyamapadalopa*, the authors mislead their readers by writing that 'the title *Bodhicaryā-*



*vatāra* means "undertaking the way or conduct to Awakening. . ." (p.188). Surely, a modern translation should give the full title, as did the old Tibetan and Mongolian versions.

Chr. Lindtner

Dharmakīrti on Compassion and Rebirth. Eli Franco. (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 38) Universität Wien, Vienna 1997. 394 pp. pbk.

This monograph focuses on the second chapter, called *Pramāṇasiddhi*, in the work *Pramāṇavārttika* by Dharmakīrti who is preoccupied in all his writings with epistemological problems, and particularly with the nature of perception and inference. Only occasionally does he choose to treat other specific philosophical topics. This chapter is interesting because it is the only piece of his writing which deals with purely religious issues, such as the two themes pinpointed by the author in the title of his book, and topics like karma, meditation, the Noble Truths or the Path — 'albeit in a philosophical manner', the author hastens to add. Relying on Frauwallner's assessment, he regards the *Pramāṇasiddhi* as having been written at an early stage of Dharmakīrti's career.

The link between compassion and rebirth, and its worthiness to become a subject of closer investigation, is established by Dharmakīrti's attempt to justify the possibility of infinite compassion which the Buddha, as is believed, possessed in full and extended to all living beings. His compassion could become infinite, runs the argument, because it was developed over an infinite number of past lives. One life would not suffice for developing an infinite mental property, so the existence of past lives is a necessary precondition of this boundless compassion. The fact that the Buddha extended such compassion to all living beings is in turn a proof of the existence of the 'other world' (*paraloka*), by which is meant the world of rebirth or *Samsāra*,

This, of course, is a kind of circular argument. Its proof value rests with the authority and reliability of the person of the Buddha who knew the truth and told it, since the faculty of perceiving other worlds (*paralokasiddhi*) and the rebirth of beings in them is not possessed by everybody and those who may possess it cannot directly prove the truth of their vision to others. But how

can the reliability of the Buddha and his vision be guaranteed? Here the author rightly sees a genuine philosophical problem concerning the relationship between faith and reason in the Buddhist tradition.

However, I would intervene here and add: A philosophical problem it may be for the long line of Buddhist philosophical thinkers, but the followers of the Buddha's teachings have solved it right from the start, as do practitioners of the Buddhist path today, by not having so much a religious *faith* in his teachings, but rather *confidence* in his spiritual guidance. Preliminary acceptance of his higher vision (past lives, other worlds, the karmic process, etc.) on trust is to be corroborated by one's own eventual experience. Prior to that, it can also be rationally argued for, but its logical justification can proceed, strictly speaking, only on the basis of *likelihood*. It is logically more likely to expect continuation than total annihilation of personality at death. It is logically more likely to expect to reap corresponding temporary fruits of one's deeds in the process of rebirth rather than to be assigned to eternal bliss or damnation, either of which would hardly be deserved after just one life.

These are probabilist arguments which may be put forth for other worlds and dimensions of existence and rebirth in them and for karma, i.e. the operation of some kind of causal law in the sphere of ethics. That is as far as reason can go. Should the acceptance of the Buddha's teachings rest purely on religious faith in his authority, it would put the Buddhist tradition on the same footing as the Vedic-Brāhmanic-Hindu systems. The author in fact suggests that Dharmakīrti's solution 'for establishing the authority of the Buddha is structurally similar to Vātsyāyana's proof of the authority of the Vedas and to the proof of Śiva's authority put forth by the Tantric author Sadyojyoti'.

The author analyses and discusses Dharmakīrti's treatment of these topics in detail in five chapters. One of which is dedicated to Dharmakīrti's refutation of the materialistic philosophy of the *Lokāyatikas*. It forms the core of his proof of, or logical argument for, rebirth and hinges on his denial of the basic materialistic thesis about the dependence of consciousness or cognition on the body and its functions. When dealing with Hindu



opponents, the issue for Dharmakīrti is to refute their tenet that rebirth is impossible without the assumption of a permanent soul. The author's detailed exposition of the problems associated with these arguments demonstrates the breadth, richness and diversity of philosophical discussion within the Buddhist tradition and across the board in polemics with materialists and sceptics and with the schools of Hindu philosophy. In the process of elucidating Dharmakīrti's text the author quotes from and skilfully uses Dharmakīrti's commentators and shows instances when they misunderstood Dharmakīrti on some points.

Approximately half the book is taken up by the translation of Dharmakīrti's text discussed above (*Pramāṇavārttika* II, 34-72), with the commentary by Prajñākaragupta and extensive notes by the author. Appendixes and Indexes useful to specialists form the closing part of this scholarly book. Although it is by character an academic research work, experienced readers with a philosophical interest, especially in logic and epistemology, may profit from studying it, even if their acquaintance with Sanskrit covers only important philosophical terms. Students of Indian philosophical systems in general and of Buddhist schools of thought in particular can hardly afford to ignore it.

Karel Werner

How Buddhism Began. The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings. Richard F. Gombrich. Jordan Lectures 1994. Published by Athlone Press for The School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1996. xi, 180 pp. £25.00. ISBN 0-485-17417-0.

In one of Michael Innes' entertaining novels set in Oxford the heroine, Jane Appleby, an undergraduate at Somerville, decides to forgo attending the Stockton and Darlington annual lectures. After all, she was only going to savour the finer points of the 'performance', having been bequeathed the notes made by an aunt who had attended the lectures some years before. However, at London University the annual SOAS Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion with its four seminar papers is arranged on a more efficient basis, inasmuch as the lecturer changes year by year together with the subject-matter of the lectures. Furthermore, there is less of a need for note-making as the lectures are sub-

sequently published in book-form.

Professor Gombrich's book, *How Buddhism Began*, is the record of his Jordan Lectures for 1994. My only disappointment with it is that I did not attend the lectures themselves so as to 'savour the performance'. Otherwise I found this a most absorbing book, both informative and encouraging for the further understanding of the early teachings of Buddhism and its beginnings. Having its origin in a lecture, one is not overwhelmed by excessive data and argument as one might be in a written paper. Its few themes are developed with hints and subtlety, encouraging the 'listener' to discover more for himself in his own readings of the Pāli suttas.

A principle theme is that the doctrines of Buddhism were developed by the Buddha and his followers through interaction and debate with their contemporaries, and especially Brahmanism. Although the Buddha was critical of some aspects of brahmanical teachings and frequently poked fun at the brahmins for their pretensions, at the same time Buddhism was much influenced by Brahmanism, perhaps more so than other contemporary movements. Another factor that shaped Buddhist doctrine were the debates that occurred over the interpretation of the Buddha's words amongst his followers. This must have mostly happened after the Parinibbāna, when it was no longer possible to refer back to the Buddha himself for an explanation. And then there is what is referred to by Prof. Gombrich as scholastic literalism which reads into words and phrases more meaning than was originally intended. Thus the dichotomy of *paññāvimutti* (release by insight) and *cetovimutti* (release of mind) is a basic, well-known pair of terms within Theravāda. However, it is pointed out that in the early suttas the Buddha apparently uses and interchanges these terms as if they are regarded as synonymous. This and other examples must have wrought both subtle and far-reaching changes in what the Buddha originally taught.

In the final chapter, 'Who was Aṅgulimāla?', Prof. Gombrich, by the imaginative restoration of a verse the brigand Aṅgulimāla recites to the Buddha (Aṅgulimāla Sutta, M 86 = Thag. v.868) demonstrates that he (i.e. Aṅgulimāla) must have been a devotee of Śiva. Being a tantric Śaiva/Śākta ascetic would explain the



wearing of the garland of fingers of his (sacrificial) victims and other puzzling features of the story. Together with a probable reference to the goddess Kālī at Thag. vv.151-2, this is of historical interest as an early reference to a form of ecstatic religion known about previously only from a much later period.

John D. Ireland

Identity and Experience: The Constitution of the Human Being According to Early Buddhism. Sue Hamilton. Luzac Oriental, London 1996. xxxi, 218 pp. £30.00. ISBN 0 898942 10 2.

The Five Aggregates: Understanding Theravāda Psychology and Soteriology. Mathieu Boisvert. (Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religious Writings), Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1995. xii, 168 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 0-88920-257-5.

We have here two studies whose object is the *pañcakkhandhā: rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṃkhāra, viññāna*, and which try to understand these with reference to the *pañcicasamuppāda* formula.

The collection of texts known as the Pāli Canon can be studied in various ways. One can examine an element of the Teaching, treating the different Nikāyas, the Abhidhamma and the commentaries as a whole, which is what Boisvert has done; one can study one of these parts separately and take into account the contribution of the other parts, which is what Hamilton has undertaken, choosing the five Nikāyas as her central focus; or one can take smaller units, e.g. each Nikāya separately, searching for differences and discrepancies through which to establish historical development. One can make the choice whether or not to take contexts into account. Boisvert has chosen against, Hamilton has chosen for — but with limitations: she does not concern herself with textual interpolations, nor with historical development within the Nikāyas (p.104).

Boisvert is categorically uninterested in the differences between the different collections of texts or their development. As these texts were compiled over a period of 1,000 years — which is longer than we have had literature in English — I wonder whether his approach has any real validity. What is being studied, after all? For which Buddhists has this whole body of texts ever

been their source of Buddhism? Only, perhaps, a few of the historical commentators and scholastics, and today's scholars who have this literature at the disposition in books, and recently on CD-ROM as well. These different bodies of texts are evidence of the development of the Buddha's ideas over time. So while this approach may provide us with a collection of citations on a particular theme, I cannot see that it offers anything meaningful to our understanding of Buddhism.

Hamilton's approach separates the different elements of the Canon into its largest units. Her decision not to concern herself with textual interpolations, however, avoids dealing with inconsistencies at their most profound level. In an otherwise breathtakingly thorough study, it is disappointing that she did not make this final step that inevitably brings deeper insight to problems that are in danger of being smoothed over when it is omitted, albeit with seemingly convincing arguments. That being said, it is easy to be greedy when one is offered such an exceptionally excellent work as Hamilton's — it can truly only be described in superlatives. It is because this study is so exemplary in all other ways — all of its insights and perceptions based on thoroughness, careful philology, sensitivity to metaphor, general respect for contexts, awareness of background, respectful consideration of other scholars' work — that this omission is all the more frustrating.

The problem that Hamilton's book sets out to solve is 'What ... is a human being according to the Buddha's teaching?' (p.xvi). The basis for her study is the lists of five *khandhas*. It comprises an Introduction, one chapter for each of the five *khandhas*, one each on *nāmarūpa* and *manomaya*, one on 'The Attitude towards the Body' and a Conclusion.

She opens the Introduction with the problem of how to reconcile the notion of salvation with the teaching of 'selflessness' — *anattā*. Her approach is 'prompted by the Buddha's own concern with the human condition or the human being itself, an orientation which suggests that an understanding of the human constitution is important in the context of following his teachings' (p.xvii), and particularly from the three teachings which illustrate this orientation, namely, the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination — *pañcicasamuppāda*, and the *pañcakkhandhas*. She



argues that the Buddha does not answer the question 'What is man?' but 'How is man?' — 'the process of attaining Enlightenment as a goal. . . is achievable if one understands, and thus is able to overcome or reverse, the mechanics of that which is preventing it', so 'the analysis into five *khandhas* is not an analysis of what the human beings consists of, but of those processes or events with which one is constituted that one needs to understand in order to achieve Enlightenment' (p.xxiv).

Hamilton's perceptive analysis on ontological and other speculations in these texts can finally release scholars from this trap. As the Buddha only gives information that leads to the attainment of Enlightenment — hence the unanswered questions, 'Holding to an ontological view is simply the wrong approach to the solution of the problem of bondage to *samsāra*. . . Running directly counter to the Buddha's teaching that it is *not* conducive to insight, ontological speculation does not assist in one's attempt to understand the teaching he gave, which *was* intended to be conducive to insight' (p.xxv). Further, 'In view of the fact that the Buddha clearly dissociates his teachings from anything to do with ontology, it is a mistake to project any ontological significance onto the text' (p.xxix).

In Chapter I, on the *rūpakkhanda*, Hamilton shows that '*rūpa*. . . is not concerned with what the body *is* but with its living characteristics understood in terms of the four elements — the *mahābhūtā* (p.13) and particularly that the emphasis is on how the body functions. She goes into the question of the senses, of which these texts recognise six, and shows that there is 'no direct evidence of a theory of sense' in the Sutta Piṭaka. The senses are not included in the analysis of the *rūpakkhanda* or in any of the *arūpakkhandas*, but in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Later material shows that the senses are 'potentialities which determine the nature of each of the types of the individual's psychological processes'. They are 'doors through which the individual subjectively interacts with the objective world' (p.22). In considering the sense *manas* and its objects, *dhammā*, Hamilton perceptively proposes, 'that it has both a unique function as a collator of incoming data and also can be described as a sixth sense in a series of senses in that it is the sense corresponding to "mental" objects, .

. . . (acting) as a door between the objective world in its entirety. . . and the cognitive experience of the individual' (p.34).

In Chapter II, on the *vedanākhanda*, Hamilton proposes the translation of 'feeling' for *vedanā* as this takes into account the cognitive and experiential aspects better than the term 'sensation'. She observes that in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula, *vedanā* has *phassa* as its condition. Rejecting the translation of 'contact' on its own, she feels it needs qualifying and argues that *phassa* 'most commonly. . . refers to the conscious sensory or metaphorical contact which is a *sine qua non* for the arising of feelings and for the cognitive process as a whole', and that 'It also refers to an abstract impression which is also conscious but which does not originate from the coming together of a sense and its corresponding object' (p.51).

In her third chapter, on the *saññākhanda*, she rejects the translation of 'perception' for *saññā* 'because the context demands that it be translated in a way which conveys that it is discriminatory, and/or that it acts in some way as a comprehender or processor of what has already taken place' (p.54). She prefers 'apperception' because 'it implies both that its function is discriminatory, and also that it incorporates a function of assimilation or comprehension of what has been perceived so that identification can take place' (p.58). Hamilton shows that as well as the process of apperceiving, the *saññākhanda* also represents the process of conceptualising' (p.62).

In Chapter IV, on the *saṃkhārakkhandha*, Hamilton examines three contexts where this term occurs: those of the *tilakkhaṇa* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* formulas and that of the *khandhas*. She takes the position that the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* applied to a general doctrine, while the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula explains 'the "how" of human existence in *samsāra*, . . . (p.68) it applies to the way a human being arises' (p.78). 'The *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula is a synthetical explanation of how a human being functions, while the *khandha* formula is analytical' (p.73). 'The *saṃkhārakkhandha* is the "volitional constituent" of the human being (p.72). . . it is the operational aspect of karma' (p.73). This chapter includes important discussions on how karma functions, equally on the *anusaya* or biases in the personality. Hamilton puts



forward very interesting ideas but, unfortunately, omits to address the problem of the variety of ways in which this formula occurs in the Canon and the problems of authenticity, accretions through oral literature, possible lateness, and so forth. Her conclusions, therefore, hold only if one accepts that there are no important philological problems related to this formula that still have to be solved, which means accepting the authenticity of this formula as an act of faith.

In Chapter V, Hamilton points out that the texts are unsystematic in their use of *viññāṇa* and that therefore, in systematising, there is a danger in imposing headings of 'projecting... a greater degree of coherence than exists'. She discusses the *viññāṇakkhandha*, under five subheadings: the question of impermanence, *viññāṇa* as 'consciousness of', as a factor in cognition, as providing continuity, and as evolving. As the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta* and *manas* are frequently used synonymously, there is a section on these terms, and one on the relationship of *viññāṇa* and *kāya*.

Chapter VI concerns *nāmarūpa*. Hamilton begins with a presentation of the Vedic context of these terms and their association. She argues against the later Theravāda tradition's understanding of 'mind and body' as being incompatible with its main context in the Canon, the fourth link of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula. She proposes that what is meant is 'the individualising, or abstract identity, of the human being (or any other sentient being) in terms of name and form: dependent on the ignorance, formative activities and subsequent consciousness of a given life, that life has conceptual and formational individuality' (p.135).

In this chapter (p.125), she refers to the only definition of *nāmarūpa* given in the Sutta Piṭaka. Here *rūpa* is defined the same way as *rūpakkhandha* ('the four elements (and their derivatives)'), *nāma* as 'feeling, apperception, volition, sensory contact and attention' (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā*, *phassa*, *manasikāra*), and she observes that the commentary projects an analysis according to the *khandhas*. Later she comes back to this passage and its interesting features (p.130), explaining them in terms of her position. What she does *not* do is question this definition and look for ways in which it could contradict her position, and even show that the formulas she regards as unquestionable are highly

questionable, and may be contaminated by accretions and changes over time, due to the age and nature of this oral literature and the problems the early Buddhists had of understanding the Teaching. These problems are abundantly attested during the life of the Buddha himself in the many suttas when persons other than the Buddha are asked to explain his Teaching. When key terms are used 'in different contexts with quite different meanings' (p.138, etc.), it seems to me that doubt, rather than certainty, of the authenticity of the passages is the best approach. When doubt is assuaged, we may be convinced. When doubt is not addressed, however excellent the results, doubt remains!

Hamilton is equally unquestioning in her discussion of the similarities and overlap of meaning between *saññā* and *viññāṇa*. Although she is aware of mnemonic influences in this literature, she does not ask the question whether both terms should authentically be included in the formula, or consider the possibility that in this literature where 'synonym-ising' is such a strong feature, one or other of these terms may have been inserted where it did not originally belong. Why should we accept that the notion of five *khandhas* is original? At no point has she addressed this question.

Chapter VII on *manomaya* discusses many passages on the power of the mind, in the early Vedic literature as well as in the Canon.

In the chapter on the attitude towards the body, Hamilton shows that the commentaries have imposed a negative view of the body upon the analytical attitude in the Canon. As she points out very perceptively, this is relevant to contemporary meditation practice as it distorts the approach to meditation exercises which have the body as their object. 'The attitude to the body that the *bhikkhu* is to adopt is one of analytical observation... (which is) conducive to gaining insight into impermanence and selflessness... there is no foundation for stating that the body is the origin of passion, hatred and thoughts which toss up the mind' (p.175).

In her final chapter, Hamilton contributes to the *anattā* discussion, 'As the Buddha puts it: understanding dependent origination means one will no longer ask questions about *individual* (i.e. separate) existence in *samsāra*, past, future or present, such as



"Am I, or am I not? What am I? How am I? . . ." Though the doctrine of *anattā* appears to convey an overriding concern to make ontological denials, . . . it can act as something of a red herring in one's attempt to understand the constitution of the human being' (p.196). I think her argument is correct, and perceptive, but I cannot share her conviction that the historical Buddha actually used these words, which is what she implies.

Hamilton claims, 'The *paṭiccasamuppāda* doctrine is . . . unquestionably fundamental to the Buddha's teachings' (p.68). This illustrates one of the approaches into which Buddhist studies are divided: what we have received is regarded as unquestionable if it occurs often enough in the texts to contribute to their homogeneity — and never mind accounting for how it got there on each occasion. Those who follow this approach refer to information in the texts as 'the Buddha's doctrine' and use such expressions as 'The Buddha said. . .'. Another different approach is to take everything as questionable, explore anomalies, and use expressions like 'The texts say. . .' or 'The texts have the Buddha say. . .'. The first approach is more comforting! The second seems to me more scientifically meaningful. Johannes Bronkhorst (whom Hamilton does not seem to have read) has discussed this at length in the Preface to his *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India* (2nd ed., Delhi 1993). People who work in the first way will find nothing to regret in this book, while those who work in the second way, and I include myself here, will admire her work tremendously, as it deserves to be admired, and will regret tremendously that she has not applied her great gifts to some of the other questions.

That being said, within what she has set herself to do, Hamilton has succeeded very well indeed. Although her acceptance of the validity of the tautological etymologies is surprising and does not take into account that their philology is different from contemporary philology, there are many terms for which her analysis is complete and must surely be regarded as definitive. Among these are *loka* as 'the world of the subjective individual', each of the terms of the *pañcakkhandha* formula and the terms in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula that she has analysed.

The Foreword by Warder to Boisvert's book proudly proclaims

its use of the BUDSIR (Bangkok Mahidol University Databank of 1989). In contrast to Hamilton's scrupulous respect for contexts, Boisvert's book gives the impression of having been constructed out of indexes: contexts are ignored. He does, however, respect that 'it is impossible to state with conviction that any particular texts were spoken by the Buddha himself' (p.2). He postulates 'that since the commentarial tradition was incorporated within the Theravāda tradition itself, the latter must have insured that the former was consistent with every aspect of its own theory' (p.3). Such a position can only be arrived at through reading indexes or making word searches in BUDSIR. Any reading of the individual texts shows problems with all the main teachings — hence the vast and ever-growing secondary literature.

Like Hamilton, Boisvert is looking to the *paṭiccasamuppāda* to clarify the *khandhas*. He claims, 'By correlating some of the links of the chain of dependent origination with the five aggregates, it becomes clear that these links share the same order as the traditional nomenclature of the five aggregates, and that the latter fulfil the same function as the links of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*' (p.11). Later he says that his chapters '*hint* [my italics]. . . at the place (the five aggregates) could occupy among the eight middle links of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*' (p.12).

Boisvert has a chapter on the concept of *khandha*, one on each of the *khandhas* and one on the interrelation of the aggregates. An example from the chapter on the concept of *khandha* shows the confused nature of this book. Here Boisvert argues that as the *pañcakkhandhas* are mentioned in the first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, 'their intricate connotations' were already known by its audience, even though there is an 'absence of a definition of the Buddhist sense of the word *khandha* in pre-Buddhist literature' (p.18), and then he argues against this view. Just as the different bodies of texts are taken altogether with no respect for any development or contradiction, so, again, arguments are thrown together and the secondary literature used in a haphazard fashion to suit his end product. Discussion of differences of view is minimal. I do not consider that this book contributes to scholarship in any meaningful sense of that term. Boisvert claims that 'by using computer technology,



I feel that the results of this research are exhaustive in the sense that they take into consideration the entire Pāli canon' (p.1f). Hamilton's carefully researched book on the same subject proves that this is not the case. As modest and careful as Hamilton is, Boisvert is self-proclaiming. As investigative, clear and logical as Hamilton's book is, Boisvert's gives the impression of being thrown together. It is most unfortunate for Boisvert that Hamilton's book appeared at the same time as his.

Joy Manné

Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth Century Thailand. Kamala Tiyanich. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 1997, xxi, 410 pp. Cloth, \$49.00; pbk, \$29.95, £24.95. ISBN 0-8248-1768-0/1781-8

This splendid book is a substantial history of Buddhism in Siam/Thailand during this century. Although its focus is upon the forest, meditative, wandering and ascetic monks, many other aspects of Thai Buddhism are explored. The forest tradition could not be described without explanation of how the (Buddhist) authorities in Bangkok viewed it. One sometimes wonders when reading this account whether these government officials and abbots of large Bangkok wats really qualify to be called Buddhist at all. Their attitude to forest monks during the earlier part of this century was that they were vagabonds and that meditation was a waste of time. It seems to have slipped their learned minds that Phra Samana Gotom, one Thai way of referring to the historical Buddha, would by their standards also have been a vagabond while 'wasting' an extraordinary amount of time with meditation.

This review is based partly on the knowledge I gained as a monk during eleven years in Thailand (1962-73) and partly on my own small experience of the *tudong* (wandering ascetic) life there. Although originally ordained into the Mahanikai tradition, for most of my monk's life I was a member of Thammayut, a reform-minded sect originating with King Rama IV Mongkut. His taste was for a rational, disciplined and centrally controlled form of Buddhism. The history and fortunes of these two bodies of monks, now the major rivals within Thai Buddhism, is explored

by Kamala Tiyanich, who clarifies numbers of points which puzzled me while I was in Thailand.

For instance, it is a feature of modern Buddhism there that forest monks know little of the scriptural tradition, while town monks have almost no experience of meditation. This one-sided approach has certainly some roots in the Pāli Buddhist tradition — the *vipassanādhura* versus the *ganthadhura* — but the contrast is now very stark in Thailand. This is due to government policies, notably to the monks' education system instituted by the Sangharāja Wachirayan, a son of the king mentioned above. Such a system has dire results for the Sangha, with large numbers of very intelligent monks disrobing because of dissatisfaction with the bhikkhu's life: passing examinations and receiving titles seeming to be the only approved goals. When I was in Bangkok many years ago, a senior titled monk with whom I was quite friendly advised me not to persist in going off to forest wats and secluded places to meditate. If you stay in this wat, he said, you will soon become the abbot's secretary and he will give you the title of Phra Khu, followed soon by the King's bestowal of Chao Khun status (as he was himself). I replied little but thought to myself, 'So this is what becoming a monk is all about!'

Besides history of the beginnings of Mahanikai and Thammayut, the author treats readers to the lives in brief of many great meditation masters, emphasising the obstacles and difficulties they encountered and their heroic determination to overcome them. Living in the forest with robes and bowl, water container and a 'mosquito-net-tent' (*klot*) requires a strong body and a firm mind, particularly when the forest contains deadly strains of malaria, and the larger dangers of tigers and elephants. Ajahn Fan, whom I visited several times, had a sculpture of a tigress feeding her cubs by the side of his seat, under the *kuti* where each afternoon he taught hundreds of people. Why was the tigress there? In his youth, near that seat upon which he sat, he had stayed in his *klot* opposite a cleft in the rocks where a tigress lived. He took no notice of her, nor she of him. No doubt about the mindfulness and strength of loving-kindness required in that situation!

Interesting chapters contain such information and illustrate the monks' attitudes to wild animals, lonely surroundings, physical



sufferings, sexual desire and the wandering life. These details provide us with a clear picture of what these monks, later to become famous teachers, endured and how they skilfully turned such apparent obstacles to advantage for Dhamma-practice.

Though at present there are some lay Dhamma-teachers in Thailand, in the past before the Bangkok Buddhist education system began, many lay people practised and attained significant realisation. The divide between 'monks who practise Dharma' and 'lay people who make merit' has been widened by the present education system. The old Siamese traditions were more diverse, as Tiyanich shows. Not all monks then exhibited the 'Helpless Monk Syndrome' commonly found now. She shows how monks built their own wats and helped in agricultural matters. Their Buddhism was thoroughly integrated into the rural rice-farming year and its festivals. Some of their activities were deemed by Bangkok authorities to be flouting the Pātimokkha rules and so condemned, while behaviour by villagers and monks at some festivals was certainly outrageous by the standards of the puritanical Thammayut. Those monks and the villagers supporting them had of course their own standards of propriety.

Besides the male practitioners in white cloth (*pa khao*) there were many women who practised and went on almsround as well. In fact, some of them were respected locally as great teachers of Dhamma. The Bangkok authorities have very largely suppressed these wandering 'nuns' and their teachings.

The latter parts of Tiyanich's book reflect how little Buddhism has shaped the policies of modern Thai governments. The great push to 'develop' the country — from a mainly agricultural land with large stretches of forest to an industrial nation rivalling Western powers — has ensured that the forest, home to so many creatures including meditators, has largely been lost with only small patches preserved as National Parks and within forest wat boundaries. In fact, some forest teachers, who in their youth roamed unobstructed through vast tracts of jungle, have found themselves instigating tree-planting within their wat's land. Often these are the only trees for miles around. Their cool shade, now lost in the countryside generally, symbolises the cool-heartedness required for Dhamma-practice, little to be seen in the scorching

greed-hate-delusion heat of ordinary society. Now forest monks find that generally they must settle in their wats as wandering in the forests is no longer possible.

It is ironical that the formerly maligned forest practitioners have now become the focus for popular respect. As the standards of town-residing monks slip, with many scandals showing how much Western materialism has penetrated Sangha life, so people flock to the forest wats where monks are reputed to be 'purer'. With offerings of rich food and many presents, it is hard for even these monks now to remain on the meditative path. Hard to keep things simple. How will the Dhamma survive this onslaught in both town and forest?

Wholeheartedly I recommend this book to everyone who would like to know some of the 'inside' aspects of Siamese/Thai Buddhism. There are few books like this which take us inside a Buddhist culture and tradition, an examination which is at once revealing as well as absorbing.

Laurence (Khanitpalo) Mills

**Buddhahood Embodied.** Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet. John J. Makransky. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 1997. xix, 494 pp. Cloth \$73.50, pb \$24.95. ISBN 0-7914-3431-1/3432-X

If there is such a thing as *theology* within Buddhism, the best place to start out is undoubtedly the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (AA) along with its numerous Indian and Tibetan commentaries. The AA presents itself as a treatise undertaken 'to enable the wise to behold the knowledge of all modes, as demonstrated by the Buddha in the Prajñāpāramitā'. Chapter Eight, the final one, on Dharmakāya, is an attempt to systematise the Mahāyāna doctrine of the Buddha's three bodies, the Dharma body with all its elevated features and functions, and the other two bodies based on that, viz. the Enjoyment body with the thirty-two marks, etc., and the Transformation body, his normal physical incarnation as a teacher. There is an old belief that the Buddha is the Dharma, which means that he is altogether free from the evils of Saṃsāra. Still, as the great teacher he is, he remains active in Saṃsāra. Though one, he is many; though in one place, he is in many



places; though immortal, he is mortal, etc.. Here, then, is a paradox of the sort that is bound to attract theological curiosity and disputation. The Buddha is in the world, but not in (of) the world. A man and not a man.

In India more than twenty commentaries of AA 8 were composed. Some of the most important, those by Ārya-Vimuktisena and Haribhadra, are still available in Sanskrit (Abhayākara Gupta is available in two unpublished Sanskrit manuscripts in China, I may add here). Hundreds of commentaries appeared in Tibet. The fact that Haribhadra counted an extra body (giving us a total of four) predictably gave rise to much sophisticated controversy.

With this huge book, Makransky writes not just for academic scholars and students, but also for Buddhist students in the West and in Asia. He is aware that AA 8 raises some fundamental questions that may be classified as: 'historical, textual, philosophical, and theological' (p.7).

The author is a teacher of Buddhist Studies and Comparative Theology at Boston College. When he speaks of theology, he does not mean questions concerning the Jewish or Christian God, but 'questions concerning ultimate reality, which transcends ordinary experience, and its embodiment in a Buddha's knowledge, compassion, and salvific activity for beings, which transcends our comprehension'. But he also adds: 'For those interested in comparative theology, however, a study of Buddhist understandings of *dharmakāya* could instigate rewarding new lines of inquiry into the nature of God; and I believe the reverse to be equally rewarding' (p.370, n.13).

That may well be so. I certainly agree that it would be interesting, not to say perchance even amusing, to undertake a systematic comparison between, on the one hand, the curious notions about God entertained by the three 'Abrahamic religions' and, on the other hand, the concept of Brahman propagated in various fundamentally similar ways by the 'Brahmanical religions' of India, including Buddhism (which, on nearly all basic issues, can be seen as a sort of reformed Brahmanism, cf. my paper 'From Brahmanism to Buddhism' soon to appear in *Asian Philosophy*). The sons of Abraham, we can imagine, may travel far and wide to attend international conferences, and they may undertake end-

less interfaith dialogues with the sons of Brahman, all in a pious desire to comprehend the reality that 'transcends the ordinary experience and comprehension' of the common herd. Whether these comparative theologians will be successful in compassionately transcending their mutual *odium theologicum*, I know not, but one thing is certain: if comparative theology is to be taken seriously, it must take place on a much broader and sounder historical and philological basis than Makransky has been able to establish here. And, assuming that philosophy also has to do with clarity and consistency of ideas, the philosophical apparatus needs further improvement.

The style of the book is so repetitious, even loquacious, that one wonders why the editor of the SUNY series in Buddhist Studies has not urged the author, in the interest of intelligence and perspicuity, to reduce the verbiage very considerably.

The basic sources being in Sanskrit, it is disturbing that the author lacks a firm grasp of the language. On almost every page his method of transcription transcends at least my powers of comprehension. Repeatedly, for instance, a verse from the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra* (9.59) is quoted. The text simply says *dharmadhātuḥ viśuddho 'yam*. Out of this the author makes the mystical compound *dharmadhātuviśuddha*, out of which he then construes a strange 'purified realm of dharma' (e.g. p.35), as if the text now read *viśuddhadharmadhātu*. In principle, naturally, the author is aware that Sanskrit grammar and syntax may be confusing — more so, the uninformed student should be aware — than the author himself actually seems to know. Likewise, when it comes to the Tibetan. Apparently, the author makes a subtle point in observing (p.411, n.26) that the Tibetan translation misplaces the term *zhes* (for Skt *iti*), and thereby shifts the meaning. He thinks that in the Tibetan translation *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen nyid dang / chos kyi sku zhes brjod pa yin*, the *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen [pa] nyid* can be taken as the subject of the sentence. This, however, would require a *ni* instead of a *dang*. Unfortunately, his misunderstanding of the Tibetan leads him on to further misty speculations about philosophical interpretations.

I have not taken the trouble to compare all his translations with the original Sanskrit or Tibetan. No serious reader, however,



should engage in philosophical or theological speculations on the basis of mere translations (no matter how often they are repeated) before having checked the original sources carefully for himself (I know that bad Sanskrit has become a widespread habit among, especially, American Buddhologists, but I consider it no excuse).

When it comes to the historical background, the perspective given here is far too narrow. Undeniably Makransky deserves credit for placing the Buddha's Dharmakāya in the focus of theological speculations, and for calling our attention to the ancient Indian and Tibetan sources that have done so at great length. No doubt, he has done an enormous amount of work.

From his book, however, the reader hardly gets an idea that we are dealing here with a paradox that is common to all Indian Bhagavat religions. By definition, a Bhagavat (including the Buddha) has two bodies, a spiritual and a physical. A Bhagavat is the Dharma, and he *teaches* the Dharma. This paradox can be traced as far back as *Rgveda* 10.129, where (in v.6) it is asked 'Who *knows* truly? Who shall *propound*, whence it has been produced, whence is the creation?' The answer given in the celebrated hymn is that there is a Surveyor in the highest heaven, who really knows, or else knows not. In other words, already here there is a clear notion about a great teacher who knows and who proclaims. This great Person in a sense is *veda*, but he is also responsible for the promulgation of his personal knowledge. A distinction is made here between knowing and speaking, and eventually this distinction is reflected even in the earliest layers of the Buddhist Canon in the theory of the Buddha having two 'bodies', a spiritual that is the Dharma, and a physical that propounds the Dharma in a human tongue. A Bhagavat is human and he is divine. When the man is dead and gone we only have the eternal Dharma he pointed out for us to resort to. The oldest layers also know the old Vedic Superman, the *mahāpuruṣa*, the origin of the later notion about the Buddha's Enjoyment body, with all the thirty-two marks, etc. This idea can be traced back to *Rgveda* 10.90, and similar sources. Another celebrated figure that has two, if not three bodies, is the Bhagavat Kṛṣṇa. see *Bhagavadgītā* 9.11. He, too, is a Superman, a *puruṣottama*, like

Mahāvīra and Śākyamuni, etc.

Finally, if we return to the question of comparative theology — or even comparative Christology (if Christian theologians will allow me to introduce such a novel concept) — there is the phenomenon of Jesus Christ, i.e. Jesus *and* Christ, for was it not Paul (or was it Saul?) who was responsible for persuading us to assume the absurd belief that the *two* were *one*, which, historically speaking, they can never have been? He, too, speaks of the two bodies of Christ, a spiritual and a carnal. Philippians 3, 21: 'He (Jesus/Christ) will transform the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself'. If we allow the possibility of an influence (or even a case of common Hebrew plagiarism) of Indian Bhagavatism on the formation of the early Christian, this opens highly interesting perspectives. Predictably, once some sons of Brahman or Bhagavat start confronting Abraham's sons with the most recent discoveries of Indology, the Buddhist-Christian dialogue is bound to be of more than passing interest.

If Makransky's book, illuminating as it often is on the paradoxical topic of the Buddha's bodies (or embodiments), can motivate the reader to go deeper into the field of comparative theology, it will have served a good purpose, and we will be grateful to him for having done what he has done. It surely deserves a place on the shelves of those who collect good Buddhist and Christian books for further reference.

Chr. Lindtner

*No Abode: The Record of Ippen*. Trans. Dennis Hirota, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 1997. lxxxviii, 182 pp. Cloth \$32.00, pbk \$17.95. ISBN 0-8248-1978-0/1997-7.

If one consults *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* to find information about Ippen, one discovers that it is based on the 1986 Kyoto edition of the book by Dennis Hirota reviewed here. This new edition has been extensively revised and expanded, and so is even more authoritative than the earlier version. Prof. Hirota has established himself as an authority in the fields of Japanese Buddhist literary and cultural studies through a series of



translations of key Japanese Buddhist writings, all with excellent introductory essays and detailed annotation. This book follows that same tradition.

*No Abode: The Record of Ippen* combines careful scholarship with faithful and sensitive translations of high literary merit. It contains an excellent and detailed introduction to the life and thought of Ippen, as well as translations of virtually all his extant writings. In addition, it includes a detailed chronology of events in Ippen's life, correlated with references to them occurring in the writings. There is even a map showing where all the major events in the life of this itinerant charismatic preacher took place.

Ippen (1239-89) was the founder of the Ji Sect of Pure Land Buddhism. This sect was so named because believers devoted all the canonical hours (*ji*) of each day to the recitation of the Nembutsu, the repetitive invocation of the name of Amida [Amitābha] Buddha. Ippen is thus one of the key figures in the development of what Japanese historians called the 'New Buddhism' (*Shin Bukkyō*) of the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). This was the time when Zen and Pure Land Buddhism arose as powerful movements rivalling the previously predominant Tendai and Shingon Sects. The Ji Sect was originally one of the largest Pure Land sects in Japan, but today has only about 350,000 believers. Its original success may have been due to a populist appeal to an unsophisticated rural following, through its focus on Nembutsu recitation and the performance of the 'dancing Nembutsu', or *odori-Nembutsu*. These simple and charismatic practices seem to have led to a declining audience over the course of time, as a more sophisticated and urban-centred society developed in Japan.

Ippen's father, himself a Buddhist priest, as well as Ippen's early religious teachers, were all originally students of the Pure Land (Jōdo) priest Shōkū (1177-1247). Shōkū had originally been a disciple of Hōnen (1133-1212), the priest who established the original Jōdo Sect in Japan, and Shōkū himself went on to be the founder of the Seizan Branch of this Jōdo Sect. The Seizan Branch focused on salvation through the virtue of Amida's universal vow, rather than on any other meditative or non-meditative practices. This early exposure to faith in the saving power of Amida and the Nembutsu alone seems to have set Ippen on a

lifetime course of devotion to the Nembutsu as the sole key to enlightenment.

Ippen was also influenced by Esoteric Buddhism. He made several pilgrimages to sites associated with Kūkai (774-835), the founder of the Shingon Sect. Following the spirit, if not the letter, of Esoteric Buddhism, Ippen thought of the Nembutsu as a sort of mantra, analysing the syllabic sequences of the utterance *Namu Amida-butsu* ('Hail to Amida Buddha') much the way words regarded as sacred are analysed in Shingon texts.

The 'firmly settled mind' is *Namu*. 'Method of practice' is the three characters, *A-mi-da*. 'Manner of practice' is *Butsu* (Words, No.24, p.83).

Further, the Name is the term for life; the three syllables, *A-mi-da*, denote 'Immeasurable Life' (Words, No.45, p.91).

*Namu* signifies the sentient beings throughout the ten directions, *Amida* is Dharma, and *Butsu* is the person who has attained enlightenment. The six characters [of the Name] are provisionally unfolded into these three — being, Dharma, and enlightenment — and ultimately these three become one (Words, No.49, p.92).

Ippen is reported to have studied Zen under the guidance of the priest Kakushin (1207-98), and even to have received a certification of enlightenment (*inka*) from him. This was no small achievement, since Kakushin himself had received certification in China from Wu-men Hui-k'ai (1183-1260), the author of the famous koān collection *Mumonkan* (Chinese *Wu-men kuan*), widely known in the West as the 'Gateless Gate'. Kakushin introduced the study of the *Mumonkan* into Japanese Zen practice, bringing the first copy of the work back from China in 1264. Like Eisai (1141-1215), the overall founder of Zen in Japan, Kakushin mixed elements of Esoteric Buddhism with his Zen practice, and this harmonised with Ippen's own eclectic mixture of Esoteric elements with Pure Land salvationism.

A number of Ippen's poems appear to show a blend of Kakushin's Zen influence with Ippen's own Pure Land faith, as the following two examples illustrate:

Cherish no attachment  
to your self,  
your mind a mountain  
of delusive thoughts high as Ōe.



It will vanish like the dew  
off the far fields of Iku (Poem No.22, p.49).

It is Amida who is master  
of my life  
and body —  
acting freely  
in all acts of my mind  
that is not my mind (Poem No.32, p.52).

The second poem was written in 1284 to a young woman who had been an Imperial Consort, but had recently left the secular world to become a Buddhist nun. It accompanied a letter which clarified Ippen's thinking.

After the one-thought moment in which, realizing the transience of birth-and-death in our own flesh, we once genuinely and directly entrust ourselves through saying *Namu-Amida-Butsu*, the self is no longer the self. Then, as our hearts are Amida Buddha's heart, our bodily actions Amida Buddha's actions, and our words Amida Buddha's words, the life we are living is Amida Buddha's life (Letter 1, p.25).

Ippen himself regarded the *Nembutsu* as an utterance linking a person's achievement of salvation with the fulfilment of the enlightenment of Amida. He believed in one central enlightenment, reminiscent of the sudden enlightenment important in Zen, focused on and arising from the *Nembutsu*. This concept of enlightenment differed from the process of ongoing maturing of reflection through the aid of Dharma, as developed by Shinran (1173-1262), the disciple of Hōnen who founded the Jōdoshin Sect — the main *Nembutsu* Sect in Japan today. Shinran was already sixty-five when Ippen was born, so these two dynamic founders of Amida-based sects never happened to meet.

Ippen based his faith on personal visions, which seem to have had a greater effect on him than any teacher or scripture he ever encountered. These visions became part of the basic traditions of the Ji Sect. In 1271 Ippen went on a retreat at the Zenkō-ji, a temple in what is now the Nagano area. There was a painting on display depicting the allegory of the White Path, based on a text by the Chinese Pure Land master Shan-tao (613-81). A narrow white path led the pilgrim to salvation, between rivers of fire and water. Ippen was so moved by this painting that he copied it him-

self, and used the copy as a personal icon in his own devotions. Ippen saw the White Path as the *Nembutsu*, and the rivers of fire and water as the heart and mind. Amida was the figure calling from the West Bank, and Śākyamuni was the figure on the East Bank encouraging the pilgrim to go forward.

The White Path that appears before us is *Namu-Amida-butsu*, and the two rivers of fire and water are our hearts and minds. That which is not overwhelmed by the two rivers is the Name (Words, No.22, p.82).

Ippen and his followers later used a three-striped band as a sort of logo painted on their travelling cases, with a red stripe for fire, a blue stripe for water and a white stripe for the path.

In 1274, while on another pilgrimage, Ippen had a vision of what he believed to be the god of the Kumano Shrine, occurring as a manifestation of Amida. In the vision, this manifestation confirmed a doctrine of salvation preordained through the virtue of the attainment of enlightenment by Amida, and not dependent upon the attitude or qualities of the person to be saved. Ippen believed that this vision was a response to his doubts concerning the efficacy of salvation for people who seemed to be lacking in true faith. Following this revelation, Ippen spent the remainder of his life on the road, proclaiming the power of the *Nembutsu* and handing out slips of paper with the *Nembutsu* written on them. The goal he set for himself was to reach 600,000 people, and it is reported that during his remaining fifteen years of life on the road he succeeded in distributing 250,000 of these slips. Through his visions and religious experiences, Ippen came to hold the view that the attitude of the reciter is completely subsumed by the virtue of the utterance of the *Nembutsu* itself. Virtue does not accrue through repetition of the *Nembutsu*, but is already embodied infinitely in the name of Amida.

In accord with these beliefs, it seemed to him at the end of his life that there was no need for his writings or any other relics connected with him to survive. He burned all the papers he had with him, and suggested that his followers leave his corpse exposed in the open as food for hungry animals. To the very end, he maintained a fiercely consistent asceticism which earned him the title of *Sutehijiri*, the 'Holy One Who Discards Everything'.

Fortunately for posterity, many letters, poems and sayings



survive. Prof. Hirota has carefully consulted and compared all variant manuscripts and early printed versions of these writings, and has provided useful finding lists for those who wish to examine these variants in the original texts themselves. The writings consist of letters and poems Ippen wrote, as well as a series of records of his spoken words, mostly set in anecdotal contexts. Prof. Hirota's excellent and faithful translations bring out the intense sincerity and charismatic power that made Ippen such a significant figure in his own time. His poetry also shows a sensitivity and skill that should entitle him to greater attention by those involved in Japanese literary studies.

In 1281, when a number of his followers were gravely ill, Ippen wrote that:

If I alone survive,  
there will be no one who knows  
the heart's depths —  
no one with whom to speak  
of all that's gone  
as now (Poem No.9, p.43).

Through the translations in this book, Ippen speaks to us now, in our own time, and his words are highly worthy of our attention.

Michael McCaskey

The Good Heart: His Holiness the Dalai Lama explores the heart of Christianity — and of humanity. Ed. Robert Kiely. Rider, London 1996. xiv, 211 pp. £9.99. ISBN 0 7126 7275 3.

*The Good Heart* is an unusual collection of commentaries by the Dalai Lama on selected passages from the Christian gospels. Originally given at the John Main Seminar in London, 1994, the Dalai Lama's discussion spans parts of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, his teachings on the kingdom of God, his transfiguration and the Resurrection. Father Laurence Freeman introduces and chairs the discussion, enabling Christian and Buddhist discussants to participate.

What follows in the book is a dialogue, not a debate. Indeed, the Dalai Lama's authority within the Buddhist religion precludes any kind of discussion in which his pronouncements can be

regarded as mere opinion or theories for critical examination and appraisal. In this respect I found *The Good Heart* slightly disconcerting, and indeed the very activity of venturing to give a review of a book which presents the teachings of an authority figure like the Dalai Lama presents difficulties for a reviewer like myself, who is committed to accept neither the authority of Father Laurence's Roman Catholic tradition nor the teachings of the Buddhist religion.

Having said this, it was nonetheless interesting to see how a Buddhist authority regards the scriptures of a radically different tradition. It was reassuring to see that the Dalai Lama insisted on acknowledging differences between Christian and Buddhist world views, rather than emphasising points in common or finding bogus similarities. For example, when remarking on a comparison made by Father Laurence between the Buddhist notion of consciousness and the Christian concept of the 'mind of Christ', the Dalai Lama aptly reminds his audience of a Tibetan saying, 'Don't try to put a yak's head on a sheep's body' (p.103). Differences, he says, need not be divisions.

When the topic of rebirth emerges, one discussant suggests that rebirth may not be incompatible with the Christian faith. Again, the Dalai Lama does not seize on this opportunity to claim points in common, but rather perceives a virtue in the Christian view that each individual life is a special creation by God, entailing a 'very special bond between you as an individual creature and the Creator' (p.59). Some parallel may be drawn between the notion of God the Creator and the ultimate, absolute truth (p.56), and the notion of the Christian trinity and the Buddhist *trikāya* doctrine may have elements in common, but the Dalai Lama does not wish to press these similarities too far, acknowledging that the notion of creation and divinity 'is not universal to all major religious traditions' (p.74). At the level of philosophical and metaphysical dialogue, he believes, the two religions must part company (p.82).

Inter-religious dialogue, however, can often bring to light the fact that differences between religions can be unduly exaggerated. Similarities exist, and it is perhaps to be expected that comparison should be made between Jesus' teaching on loving one's enemies



with certain Buddhist meditational techniques for developing an evenness of affection between friends and enemies (p.49). Of course, the characteristic Buddhist virtue has typically been 'equanimity', entailing an evenness of warmth, rather than the kind of altruism espoused by Christians, who wish to place others before themselves, and who acknowledge special relationships such as family ties. Interestingly, the Dalai Lama comments on Mark 3. 13-25, which records an incident in which Jesus' mother and brothers seek an audience with him, to be greeted with the comment that 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother', a saying which indeed points towards equanimity rather than privileged relationships.

The discussants' interpolations are useful, although at times they do not bear any obvious relationship to the theme on which the Dalai Lama has spoken, and thus make the text lack continuity. The Dalai Lama and the Buddhist participants are perhaps better at demonstrating that there exists a variety of strands within Buddhism. In discussing Jesus' resurrection, for example, the discussants are generally agreed that it was an empirical happening, and the Dalai Lama is able to comment that it 'is a transformation of matter back into its original source' (p.121). The conflicting nature of the gospel evidence is thus left unmentioned, and the liberal-radical Christian camp, who would view the resurrection in terms of myth rather than history, is ignored.

In general, the Christian stance which is represented in the book is Roman Catholic. This is not only evidenced in Father Laurence's comments, but in the 'Glossary of Christian Terms' at the end, where it is categorically stated that Peter was the first Pope (p.160), and that there are seven sacraments (p.161). The statement that Christianity entails 'the belief that an angel is assigned to every person at birth' (p.149) is at best misleading: I have certainly not encountered many Christians who hold this view. The statement that God does not punish, but that 'sin contains its own punishment' (p.162) would certainly be challenged by many Protestants, particularly those who are neo-Calvinist in outlook: perhaps it stems more from a desire to harmonise Christianity with Buddhist doctrines of karma than to reflect faithfully the Christian tradition. The 'Glossary of Buddhist Terms', by

contrast, acknowledges freely the variety of traditions and shows no such harmonising tendencies.

All in all, the book is certainly of interest in a number of ways. To see how the Dalai Lama interprets these selections from the gospels enables Christians to see the gospel message through new eyes, and Buddhists to explore the Dalai Lama's teachings through the vehicle of Christianity. The authority and centrality of the Dalai Lama in the seminar makes the discussion a somewhat unusual one, in which it is not totally clear what the rules of discussion actually are.

One gains the impression that the Dalai Lama, Father Laurence and the discussants have found the dialogue a fruitful one. The outcome is unlikely to be an ecumenical syncretistic 'Christian Buddhism'; as the Dalai Lama says, 'I do not personally advocate seeking a universal religion' (p.73). But if the aim is a modest increase in mutual understanding, then this dialogue has certainly achieved its goal, and will continue to do so on the part of Buddhist and Christian readers of *The Good Heart*.

George D. Chryssides

Mysticism Buddhist and Christian. Encounters with Jan van Ruusbroec. Paul Mommaers and Jan Van Bragt. Crossroad, New York 1995. 302 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 0-8245-1455-6.

This is a fascinating book, with two stated aims. One is to find potential similarities between the mysticism of John Ruusbroec, a fourteenth century Flemish Christian mystic, and Buddhist mysticism; the other to 'draw the attention of the English-speaking public to Ruusbroec's mystical doctrine'. In this latter aim it is more successful than in its aim to find in Ruusbroec's mysticism similarities with Buddhist mysticism.

The two authors have contributed alternate chapters, Paul Mommaers writing on Ruusbroec's mysticism and Jan Van Bragt on Buddhist mysticism. The work is divided into three parts, Part 1 entitled 'The Nature of Mysticism', Part 2, 'The Human and Transcendent' and Part 3, 'Natural Mysticism'.

The fundamental problem addressed, in the first part of the book examining the nature of mysticism, is that of comparing the



mysticism of a Christian, whose religion has a theological and dualist basis, and that of Buddhism, which is arguably atheistic and monist.

In Part 2 of the book, exploring the relationship between the human and the transcendent, we again encounter the problems arising from comparing two systems which are so fundamentally different. The 'ultimate realities' of a mediaeval Christian creator god and the apparent Buddhist aim of annihilation of the self appear irreconcilable. This problem is further tackled in Chapters 6 and 7. Here the core of Ruusbroec's belief in 'the superessential life' and his approach to his deity 'without intermediary' is discussed. It is quite clear throughout his works that, for Ruusbroec, God and man remain quite distinct. This contrasts with the teaching of the Buddha that 'fixation on the ego is the cause of all suffering'. The logical conclusion from that being that 'the supreme task on the spiritual path is to do away with the ego' (p.136). Chapters 7 and 8 discuss Ruusbroec's writings concerning union with God and the apparently heretical idea, at least to the mediaeval Christian Church, that such meeting could be 'without intermediary'. The dual nature of Ruusbroec's ideas about being 'mystically one with God' is drawn out, and quotations from his works used to discuss his ideas about work and rest and whether or not he felt he had transcended religious practices (p.169). Although he speaks of an 'annihilating life', which could indicate a complete elimination of the ego, the book continues to argue, correctly I think, that to Ruusbroec God always rests in and remains distinct from the human. Chapter 9 again approaches the basic comparison between Ruusbroec's mystical path and that of the Buddhist. The paradoxes in Ruusbroec's works, such as that of work and rest, are compared to Zen paradoxes. The position of 'good works' in Ruusbroec's system and in Mahāyāna Buddhism, in which 'compassionate means' are used in the attempt to negate the ego, is also discussed.

Part 3 concerns Natural Mysticism. I consider this to be the best part of the book and would have preferred to read these three chapters at the beginning rather than at the end. The apparent fundamental problem of comparing mysticisms from a theistic and very structured religious system and a possibly

atheistic religion, the philosophy of which encourages lack of structure, is tackled and very effectively so. Chapter 10 contains Ruusbroec's criticism of those practising natural mysticism in the fourteenth century, and is followed by a chapter on Buddhism and natural mysticism which contains an ingenious argument for the possibility that Buddhists may in some cases admit the existence of 'the grace of God', a concept which is very important to Ruusbroec. I find this argument unconvincing. The final chapters offer a critique of natural mysticism, both Buddhist and Christian.

I hope anyone with an interest in mysticism will read this book but warn that it is misleadingly titled. The subtitle of the book, 'Encounters with Jan van Ruusbroec' would have been more appropriate than 'Mysticism Buddhist and Christian'. Both authors come at their subject from a Western Christian background and this bias is very obvious in the text. The work of one fourteenth century Christian mystic is compared with Buddhist texts which range in type of Buddhism discussed and in chronology. Although the book may give the writings of Jan van Ruusbroec a wider audience, it fails to compare like with like and the only similarities in mysticism Buddhist and Christian I could find in it are in the descriptions of the personal experience of the mystical state.

*Ann Cattermole*

Women, Men and Angels: An Enquiry concerning the relative spiritual attitudes of men and women. Subhuti. Windhorse Publications, Birmingham 1995. 101 pp. £4.99. ISBN 0-9-4766-75-6.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order believe that they are creating a New Society, that is, one guided by Dharma, in contrast to the present civilisation driven by greed, hatred and delusion. However, this publication by Subhuti, a senior Order member, gives one pause for reflection that after all the 'New Society' may not be much different from the old.

This small work is well written and persuasively argued. The point of view adopted here, though, I found rather unpalatable. Of course the unpalatability of views must remain rather subjective until they are examined in the light of the Dharma. So now we have to examine some views expressed in this work which,



apparently, are in agreement with those of Sangharakshita, Subhuti's teacher. He is not quoted directly but the views are rather quotations from another of Subhuti's books and these form the core of this work. I give them here so that they can be examined in this review as well as pondered by readers.

The first of these is as follows: 'Nonetheless based on [Sangharakshita's] experience with his female disciples and friends, he follows Buddhist tradition in regarding women as at somewhat of a disadvantage, at least at the commencement of the spiritual life'. The second states: '[Sangharakshita] does not accept that history reveals the consistent oppression and enslavement of women by men. . . The feminist reading of history as the story of Woman's oppression and exploitation by Man belongs not to history but to mythology'.

Now let us consider the first statement in the light of Buddhist teachings. Subhuti attempts to justify his statement by referring to the female body's menstrual and reproductive cycles which he avers are a hindrance to Dharma-practice, in fact to spiritual life generally. He tries to buttress his statement by referring to the Buddha's words (p.48f) without actually quoting him. There are indeed in the Pāli suttas and jātakas a number of misogynist references, one or two quite vile — put into the mouth of the Buddha. But before placing too much emphasis on these 'words of the Buddha' one should first realise that the whole Pāli tradition — Vinaya, Sutta, Abhidhamma and commentaries — was recorded, transmitted and created by monks; nuns and lay people appear to have played no part in this. This means that we can expect to find — as indeed we do find — monkish bias against women. Therefore, one needs caution whenever there is a danger of bias — as there is in this assertion that women generally have more difficulties with Dharma-practice than men. I wonder, though, whether generalisations of this sort (also defended by Subhuti) have much value. And if women were to make them, would they not also tend to be biased in favour of their own sex, as Subhuti is towards his?

I find the notion, attributed to Sangharakshita, of a fivefold hierarchy — animals, women, men, artists and angels — rather distasteful and one that apparently ignores the teaching of rebirth.

What kind of 'hierarchy' can one have when in one life one rides high as a man only to fall down, as a result of karma, to animal or worse in the next? The usual Buddhist list of the six realms: hells, animals, ghosts, demons, humans and devas is certainly governed by karma and cannot really be regarded as a hierarchy. This work, after all, implies something long-lasting and established, while the Wheel of Birth and Death means constant change. And, no doubt, it is a *man* who has decided that above animals come women, who in turn are topped by men. Surely only a *man* would conceive of this!

Buddhist teaching generally is about losing this non-existent ego, while hierarchies in this world are always about promoting egos. Whether they are found in business or government, class or caste, such more or less rigid divisions always tend to enlarge the selves of those high on the ladder, never diminish them. This may be inevitable in society where Dharma is a small consideration but hierarchy in the spiritual life needs careful attention. There are apparently numerous examples in Buddhist texts. Besides the six realms which have been mentioned above, there are the four paths and fruits of Theravāda and the ten bodhisattva levels of the Mahāyāna. But these should not really be regarded as hierarchies either, because those who experience such stages of Dharma-practice do not thereby change their egos — in fact they are diminished by these events.

There is a persistent tendency in the texts, more prominent in Mahāyāna than in Theravāda, to view a woman's body as a hindrance to Dharma-practice. Tales are told of female disciples transforming themselves to males, or being reborn as such, so as to enjoy the advantages of a male body. This tendency persists to our days in traditional Buddhist societies where women vow to attain a male body in their next life — so that they may become a monk, for instance (this is quite common in Theravāda lands where true nuns are not found). But Subhuti is quite wrong when he writes (pp.29-30), 'In order to be reborn at higher levels, a woman must first take up a man's consciousness'. He then quotes a Pāli sutta, The Questions of Sakka, from Dīgha-nikāya, in support of his contention: 'It is because the route to the androgynous lies through the masculine that the gods — or angels as we might



say — are always spoken of in the masculine...?

It appears from this that Subhuti does not know his Buddhist cosmology very well. Every Buddhist tradition recognises the three worlds: sensual, subtle form and formless. Humans and beings less fortunate than us find themselves in the sensual realm — but so do six realms of devas and devīs, beginning with the Four Great Kings and ending with those having power to create others' forms. Plenty of females there enjoying the sensual realm heavens! Psychologically, it is of course the result of dualistic subject-object thought and the making of wholesome karma regarding generosity and precepts that creates such heavenly realms. In those realms there is even 'subtle' sex between devas and devīs — no reproductive sex is necessary as beings reborn there do so spontaneously without parents. Angels, by contrast, seem sexless (not surprising in the Christian background which Subhuti seems to take for granted) and of course are not involved in the incessant round of birth and death. Incidentally, in line with Christian 'seriousness' angels are not seen smiling (as we notice in the reproduction of William Blake's engraving on the cover of Subhuti's book), while devas and devīs of the sensual realm laugh and play. 'The route to the androgynous' passes through these supersensuous planes of existence towards the Brahma or subtle form realm. There, it is true, there is no sexual differentiation because the states of mind experienced there are more deeply meditative. Beings in the Brahma-realm are called 'male' simply because in the Pāli language nouns must have a gender. These beings in reality are neither male nor female.

Returning a moment to consider the idea 'a woman must take up a man's consciousness', I have never heard of any such term in Pāli or Sanskrit as 'a man's consciousness'. What would that be: *purisa-viññāṇa*/ *puruṣa-vijñāna*? What sort of 'male mind' could be found which is different from a theoretical 'female mind'?

The great weakness of the whole book, as I see it, is that in trying to prove the superiority (in some respects) of men over women, Subhuti for all his suppositions and allowances fails to recognise the Dharma's position: NO ONE IS EQUAL TO ANYONE ELSE. Mixes of karma and its results ensure this on the relative

level, while absolutely, who is there to be compared to *whom*? Comparison involves conceit: 'I am better, I am equal, I am inferior'. So Subhuti conceives women as (in some senses) inferior, so this is his conceit (*māna*), not a factor that is spiritually profitable. Despite his generalisations, I failed to find his arguments in this direction at all useful. These are his views (*ditṭhi*).

The second statement (see above) seems worth less criticism. One does not need to have a feminist critique of history (and there was no such thing when I was young) to see that women were in the past denied opportunity to develop their lives. Of course, most men were denied it too — as Subhuti remarks. *But*, those in power were invariably men, the governing classes, whether brahmins and kṣatriyas in India, or the aristocratic men who ran the British government. Women were not in power (except in bed behind the men). It is no use pretending that women were limited solely by their involvement with their reproductive cycle. It was generally held by men, in India as in Europe, that 'a woman's place is in the home'. I cannot believe that her place in the FWBO's New Society will be a reversion to this limited goal, definitely one which serves men as much as it limits women.

Finally, it appears that sex is viewed by the FWBO as an obstacle to practising Dharma, as indeed it is proclaimed in many Theravāda and Mahāyāna texts. Anuttarayoga tantras, however, have a different view entirely. Perhaps this view does not appear in Subhuti's book as the tantras are seen as an esoteric practice for the few? However, present Dharma teachings upon the subject contradicts this assumption.

I ask again: Who can be equal to whom?

Laurence Mills



# THE JOURNAL OF INDO-JUDAIC STUDIES

an annual journal dedicated to analyzing the affinities and interactions between Indic and Judaic civilizations from ancient through contemporary times.



Authors in numbers 1 and 2 include:

STEVEN BOWMAN  
MIRIAM DEAN-OTTING  
MAURICE S. FRIEDMAN  
GARY J. JACOBSON  
NATHAN KATZ  
KENNETH P. KRAMER  
P. R. KUMARASWAMY  
JOAN G. ROLAND  
NORBERT M. SAMUELSON  
L. N. SHARMA  
DIANE M. SHARON  
IRA M. SHESKIN  
FRANK JOSEPH SHULMAN  
JAEEL SILLIMAN  
SHALVA WEIL  
BRIAN WEINSTEIN  
BIBHUTI S. YADAV

To subscribe, send a check for \$15 payable to  
"The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies" to:  
The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies  
C/o Department of Religious Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
CANADA S7N 0W0

Manuscripts and books for review should be  
sent to:  
The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies  
C/o Department of Religious Studies  
Florida International University, DM 302  
University Park  
Miami, FL 33199

## Notice to Contributors and Subscribers

We welcome contributions to this journal in any aspect of the field of Buddhist Studies.

All Mss should be sent to the Editor or the US representative at the addresses given below in (2). Copyright will automatically be vested in this journal, unless a contributor stipulates otherwise.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Annual Subscription

(1) UKABS Membership (including subscription to BSR): £12  
(unwaged £9)

by cheque made payable to 'UK Association for Buddhist Studies' to be sent to:

Dr Ian Harris, UKABS Treasurer, Dept. of Religious Studies,  
University College of St Martin, Lancaster LA1 3JD — England

OR

BSR (journal) only : Individual : £7.50 / US\$11.00  
Joint or institutional : £12.50 / US\$19.00

Sterling payment by Giro transfer to A/C No. 52 613 4003, or cheque, made payable to 'Buddhist Studies Review' to be sent to:

(2) Russell Webb (Editor BSR), 31 Russell Chambers, Bury Place,  
London WC1A 2JX — England

Or, for NORTH AMERICA — payments in US\$:

Prof. Charles S. Prebish (US Representative BSR), The  
Pennsylvania State University, Religious Studies Program, 108  
Weaver Building, University Park, PA 16802-5500, USA.

\*\*\*\*\*

The address of the Institut de recherche bouddhique Linh-Son is:  
Tùng-Lâm Linh-Son International, Dhamma Ville, Hameau des  
Bosnages — Rancon, F-87290 Chateauponsac, France

\*\*\*\*\*

Cost of covers by courtesy of the Spalding Trust